

Attractions

MAGAZINE

Fall 2019
Volume 12, Issue 4

Hagrid's

Magical Creatures
Motorbike Adventure

Thrilling Fans at
Universal Orlando

How to get to Sesame Street
at SeaWorld Orlando

Inside Lego Movie World

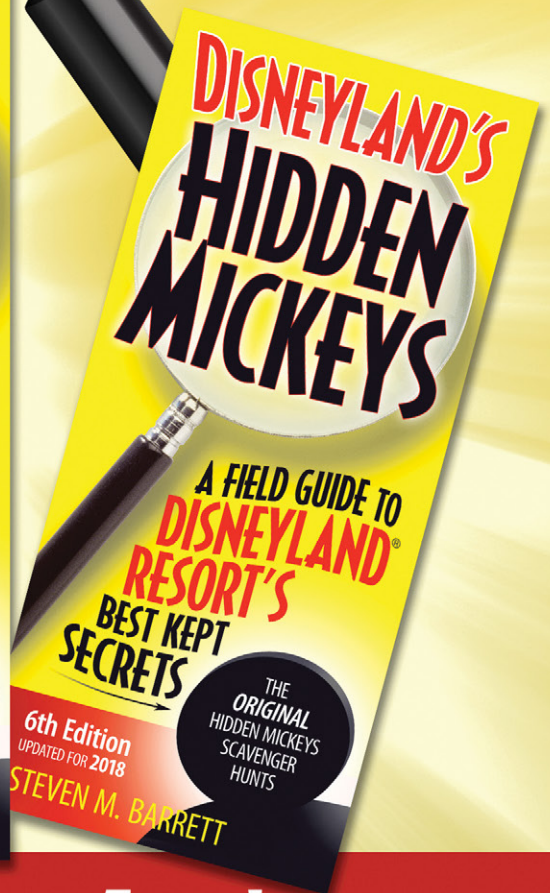
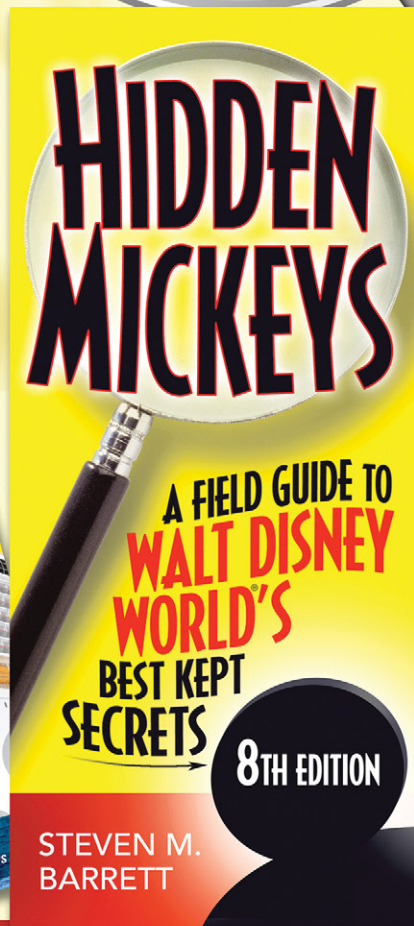
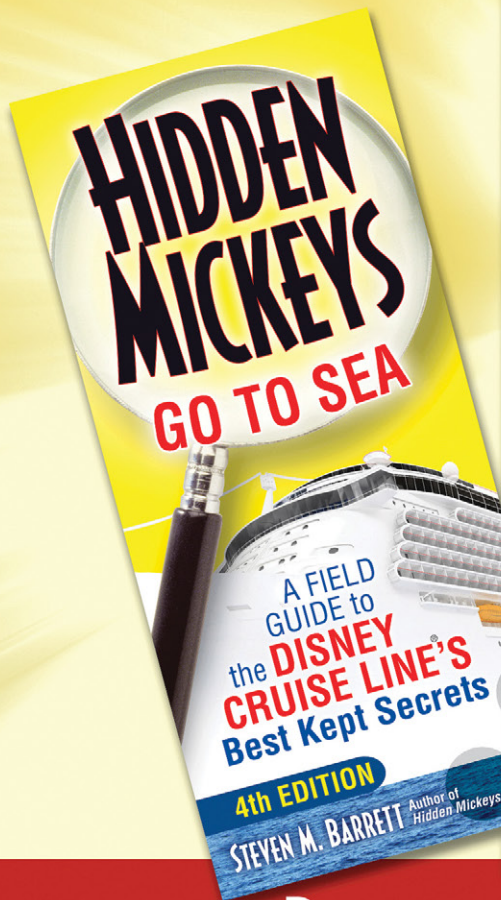
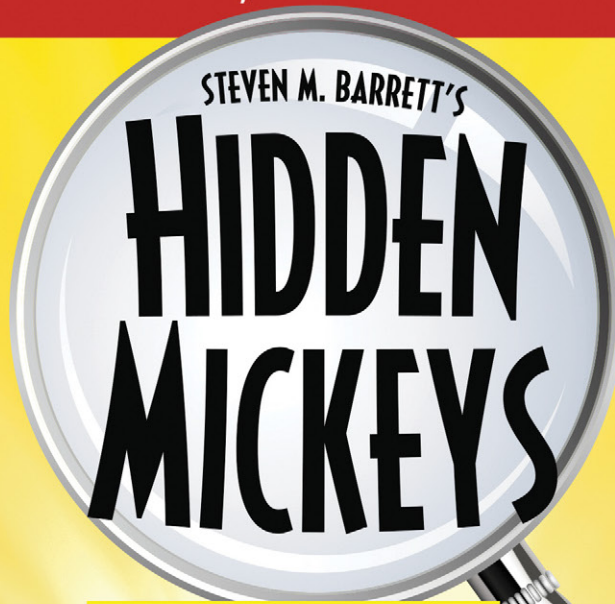
Resort Report:
Aulani, a Disney Resort & Spa

Q&A with Imagineer
Kevin Rafferty

PLUS:

Updates, Rumors,
Games, Cartoons,
Coming Attractions
& More!

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ON THE COVER

It's hard to not find a smiling rider on Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure. Photo by Matt Roseboom.

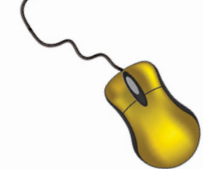
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WHAT'S NEW ON ATTRACTIONSMAGAZINE.com

By Banks Lee

Check our website regularly for more articles and videos. Stay up-to-date with all the latest theme park and attraction news through our weekly videos and shows, our free iPhone/iPad app and our free e-mail newsletter.

D23 EXPO 2019



Every two years, Disney holds their fan convention, the D23 Expo. There is always plenty to see and do during the convention weekend, and we are always there to cover it all! Be sure to head to our website and YouTube page for recaps from some of the presentations, all the news announced, a tour of the show floor and more.



UNIVERSAL'S EPIC NEW PARK

Universal Orlando Resort is expanding with the announcement of a fourth park, Universal's Epic Universe. So far, the only details we know are the location and a piece of concept art. But based on rumors, we have broken down the artwork to present what each land could be once the park opens. Head to our website and YouTube channel for the full visual breakdown.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR THE PARKS



Our contributor Brooke Geiger McDonald has been compiling several lists for our website ranging from money and time-saving tips, to the best things to eat and drink at Aulani in Hawaii. See if you agree with her about which Walt Disney World rides are better than their Disneyland counterparts and vice-versa? Search her name at AttractionsMagazine.com for all her articles.

GRAND OPENINGS GALORE

Over the past several months, we have seen some major openings take place, including Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge on both coasts, Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure, The Lego Movie World and more. We have full videos of their star-studded grand opening celebrations and more at [YouTube.com/AttractionsMagazine](https://www.youtube.com/AttractionsMagazine).

EASTER EGGS ON BATUU

Whenever a new attraction or land opens at a theme park, one of the things fans like to look for are hidden details and references. Disney is known to throw a hidden Mickey



or two out there, but how about a hidden Millennium Falcon? There are lots of easter eggs to be found in Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, and we have rounded them up on our website.

LIVE FROM THE PARKS

Follow us on Twitter @Attractions, on Pinterest at Attractions, on Instagram @attractionsmagazine and our Facebook page at [facebook.com/attractionsmagazine](https://www.facebook.com/attractionsmagazine). We frequently post on-the-spot information, photos and live videos while we're inside the theme parks. You can also see our latest videos if you subscribe to our YouTube channel at [youtube.com/attractionsmagazine](https://www.youtube.com/attractionsmagazine). Be sure to click on the bell icon to be notified when we post new videos.



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For more information about how this fundraiser will make a difference in the life of a child, please visit givekidstheworld.org.



FEEDBACK

Favorite Fan Photos and Stories.



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I am a villager of Batuu and this morning 8D-J8 was doing his usual complaining! As I turned, I saw how beautiful our pod engine roasting that Ronto meat was, with our three beautiful suns rising behind it; and I couldn't help myself but be happy and proud to live on Batuu! Till The Spire! — Sage Fazzzone



The Epcot Food & Wine Festival is for all ages. This picture was taken while celebrating our adoption day. — Jay Porote Torres



For a change, I didn't hit any big parks this summer, but managed to find myself on old Route 66 a couple of times and discovered the gem that is Uranus Fudge Factory and General Store, quite by happenstance. It's a really classic roadside attraction, in the unincorporated town of Uranus, Missouri. They have everything from an escape room to a classic freak show, even a mayor! Yep, of Uranus. It's good clean fun for the whole family, loaded in Americana and as an attraction designer, a real inspiration. — Stephen Erin Dinehart



Thank you for my B-day shoutout on the Feb. 22nd Show. That's always a thrill. — Paschal and Diane Sciarra



My little cousins think Edna Mode and I are the same person. So when my husband and I took our trip in March, I knew I had to take a picture with my "twin". This was at Hollywood Studios in (former) Pixar Place. My Celebration button says Home because we were stationed in Germany for three years and had just moved back to the states. Throughout our entire trip, cast members and characters asked us what the buttons meant and they couldn't wait to hear our story. "Cousin Frank" at 50's Prime Time Cafe brought us a special Mickey Mouse cupcake complete with a candle to help us celebrate the occasion. — Aimee Bottoms



We celebrated my daughter's third birthday at Magic Kingdom. Miss Lillian (yes, named after Walt's wife) got a magical moment when she was escorted to the front of the line to meet Snow White. — Sarah Heckman Tittlebaum



Fifteen years ago we visited Disneyland for the very first time and instantly fell in love with the place. Last August we went back (for the fourth time) and visited Batuu. The trip wouldn't be complete without a lightsaber! It felt good to be back home. — Jort Laban



My friends and I visited the Magic Kingdom over Fourth of July weekend. Two of us are annual passholders, so we were really excited that one of our besties was able to join us during the 'bring a friend' days. — Victoria Morea



Me and my best friend are Star Wars fans, so it was only right I took him to the cast preview. It was absolutely awesome, detail after detail. It definitely felt like we were in a land far, far away. — Javaris Deon Dumps



I have been visiting Walt Disney World since I was a small child. With more than 70 visits between the ages of 7 and 21, I have grown up there. This summer, we decided to go the West Coast and visit Disneyland Resort. I was very apprehensive when it came to visiting Disneyland. I am a creature of habit, always set in my ways. Upon arriving to our resort and venturing over to the parks, I began to feel nervous. What if I don't like it? As I entered Disneyland, I kept my head down, eyes on the pavement. I wanted the perfect view of Sleeping Beauty Castle. After a few steps down Main Street, I looked up and there she was. I was amazed. I could see Walt in every aspect of this park. His vision was finally made clear to me. Visiting this resort gave me deeper love for my home resort, Walt Disney World. To see how different, yet alike the two resorts are is amazing. I am anxiously awaiting my return! — Bella Hamm



My birthday present from my wife was a day at SeaWorld. We also got to do a backstage tour and see some penguins up close, and even pet a shark! — Frank Doodle Willis



My mom and I took a trip to Disneyland and California Adventure this August. I recently fell in love with the movie "Cars", so being in Cars Land made my heart happy. We spent a lot of our trip walking up and down Radiator Springs! — Charlotte Coronado



We are a Tower of Terror family, for sure. We always take a bunch of pictures as we approach it. This year, my 12-year-old son wanted to make sure he took a selfie, so I grabbed my phone and took a pic of him taking his selfie. — Colleen Connolly Townsend

WRITE TO US!

We want your letters and photos! If you have any comments about the magazine, questions about traveling to theme parks or fun stories or photos to share, simply e-mail us at info@attractionsmagazine.com.



THEN & NOW

Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge

By Matt Roseboom

Last issue, we took a look at the Then and Now concept art for Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge. This issue, we're going to look at the actual land the Walt Disney World version sits on. As you can see in the aerial photos, the street that now takes you to Batuu used to be part of the Streets of America, and led you to the Lights, Motors, Action! Extreme Stunt Show. These areas, plus part of the Studio

Backlot Tour, were demolished to make room for Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge. The ground-level "Then" photo was taken in front of the Lights, Motors, Action! attraction entrance, looking down the Streets of America. If you stand in this area today and look that same direction, you'll be looking at the entrance to the Rise of the Resistance attraction, as seen in the ground-level "Now" photo.

THEN ▼



NOW ▼



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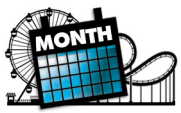
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COMING ATTRACTIONS

Upcoming attractions you may want to plan your vacation around.

By Banks Lee



DISNEY SKYLINER

Location: Walt Disney World Resort

Opening Date: September 29, 2019

This new gondola system will connect Disney's Hollywood Studios and Epcot to four nearby resort hotels — Disney's Art of Animation Resort, Disney's Pop Century Resort, Disney's Caribbean Beach Resort, and the upcoming Disney's Riviera Resort.

EPCOT FOREVER

Location: Epcot; formerly IllumiNations:
Reflections of Earth

Opening Date: October 1, 2019

A limited-time experience, this nighttime spectacular will be set to classic Epcot tunes. The show begins with a spark of imagination that quickly grows into a spectacle of fireworks, music, lighting, lasers, and choreographed special effects kites.



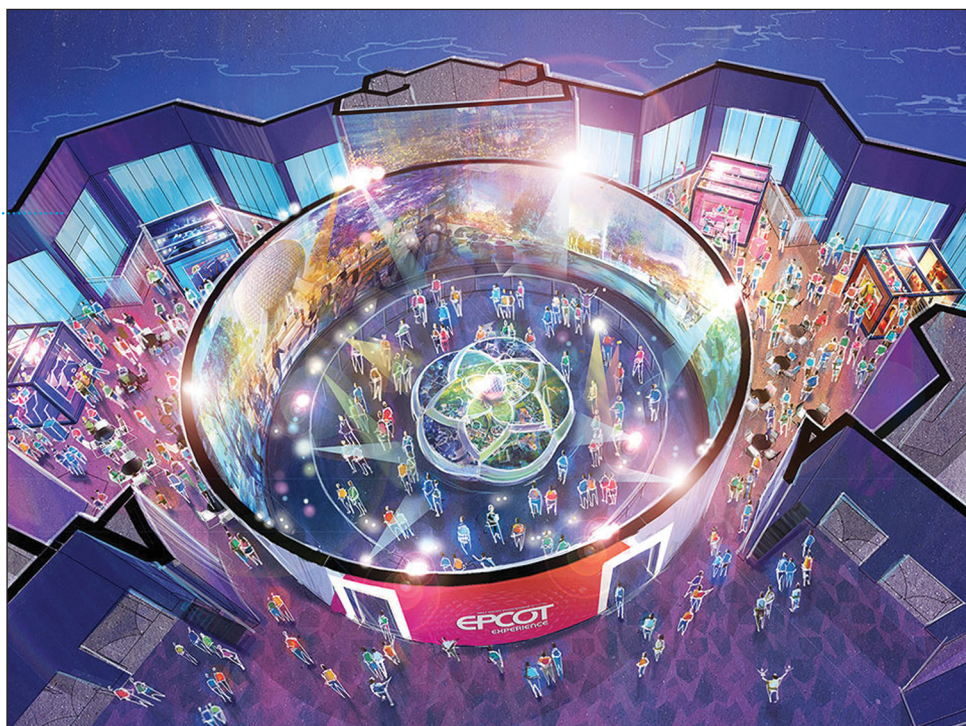


WALT DISNEY IMAGINEERING PRESENTS THE EPCOT EXPERIENCE

Location: Epcot's Odyssey Events Pavilion

Opening Date: October 1, 2019

Guests will be able to visualize the exciting plans for Epcot when the doors open for Walt Disney Imagineering presents the Epcot Experience. They will discover engaging and interactive exhibits that showcase the relentless innovation, energy, and excitement driving the park's future.



RIVIERA RESORT

Location: Walt Disney World Resort, near Caribbean Beach Resort

Opening Date: December 16, 2019

Inspired by the European grandeur Walt Disney experienced in his travels along the Mediterranean coastline, this resort will be the 15th Disney Vacation Club property. Reservations are now open.



CITY WORKS EATERY & POUR HOUSE

Location: Disney Springs; formerly DisneyQuest

Opening Date: Winter 2019

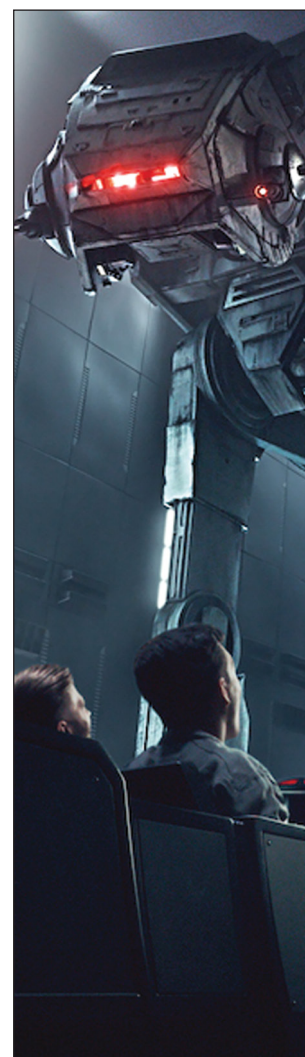
This lively eatery and pour house-style restaurant will offer a large draft selection of local, regional and global craft brews with a constantly rotating draft list, complemented by classic American cuisine with chef-driven twists.

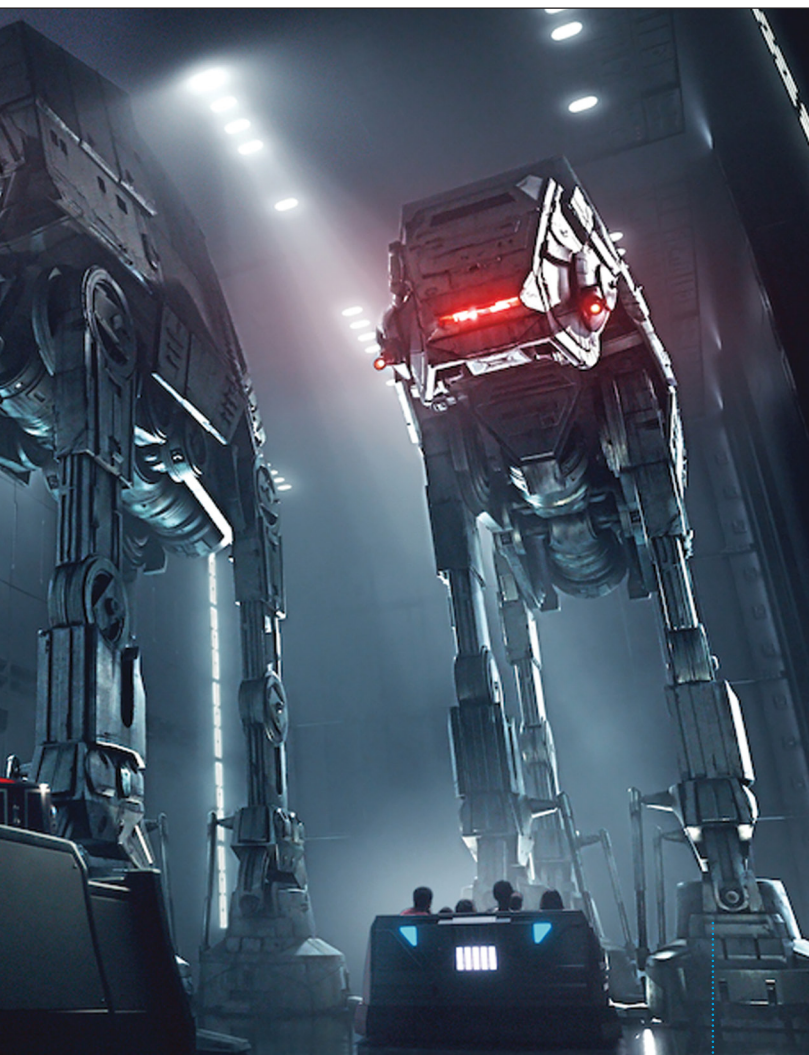
SPACE 220 RESTAURANT

Location: Epcot, World Discovery

Opening Date: Winter 2019

An expansion of the Mission: Space pavilion, the new restaurant will open this winter as an out-of-this-world culinary experience with the celestial panorama of a space station, including daytime and nighttime views of Earth from 220 miles up.



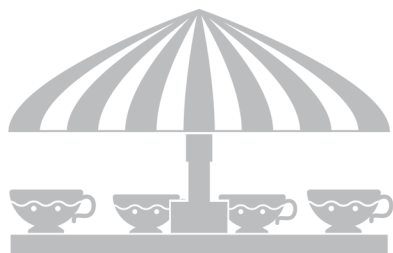


STAR WARS: RISE OF THE RESISTANCE

Location: Disney's Hollywood Studios; Disneyland Park

Opening Date: Dec. 5, 2019 (Walt Disney World); Jan. 17, 2020 (Disneyland)

Once open, Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance will "blur the lines between fantasy and reality" as it puts guests right in the middle of a galactic conflict between the Resistance and the First Order.



2020 AND BEYOND

- "Beauty and the Beast" sing-along — Epcot's France Pavilion
- Canada Far and Wide in Circle-Vision 360 — Epcot's Canada Pavilion
- Awesome Planet — Epcot's The Land Pavilion, formerly Circle of Life
- New Cirque du Soleil show — Disney Springs
- Universal's Endless Summer Resort — Universal Orlando Resort
- Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway — Disneyland Park
- Tri-Circle-D Ranch redesign — Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground
- The Lego Movie World — Legoland California and Legoland Billund
- Pirate Island Hotel — Legoland Florida Resort
- Orion giga coaster — Kings Island
- Remy's Ratatouille Adventure — Epcot's France Pavilion
- Mystic River Falls — Silver Dollar City, formerly Lost River of the Ozarks
- Soaky Mountain water park — Sevierville, Tenn.
- South Bay Shores expansion — California's Great America
- Boogie Board Racer — Carowinds
- Avengers Campus — Disney California Adventure
- HarmonioUS — Epcot's World Showcase
- The Secret Life of Pets: Off the Leash — Universal Studios Hollywood
- Roundup Rodeo BBQ restaurant — Disney's Hollywood Studios
- Mako dive coaster — SeaWorld San Diego
- Gwazi update — Busch Gardens Tampa Bay
- Mountain Bay Cliffs & Beagle Brigade Airfield — Canada's Wonderland
- Orlando Slingshot and Orlando Gyro Drop Tower — Icon Park, International Drive
- Legoland New York — Goshen, New York
- Beauty and the Beast expansion — Tokyo Disneyland
- Super Nintendo World — Universal Studios Japan; Universal Orlando Resort; Universal Studios Hollywood
- Disney Wish cruise ship — Disney Cruise Line
- Fantasy Springs — Tokyo DisneySea
- Universal's Epic Universe — Universal Orlando Resort
- Avengers E-Ticket attraction — Disney California Adventure
- Tron Lightcycle Run — Magic Kingdom
- Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser — Walt Disney World Resort
- Transformation of Epcot — Walt Disney World Resort
- Spaceship Earth revamp — Epcot's World Celebration
- New Pavilion — Epcot's World Celebration
- Dreamers Point — Epcot's World Celebration
- Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind — Epcot's World Discovery, formerly The Universe of Energy
- Journey of Water, Inspired by "Moana" — Epcot's World Nature
- PLAY! Pavilion — Epcot's World Discovery, formerly Wonders of Life
- Mary Poppins attraction — Epcot's United Kingdom Pavilion
- Wondrous China — Epcot's China Pavilion
- Reflections: A Disney Lakeside Lodge — Walt Disney World Resort
- Lighthouse Point — Island of Eleuthera
- Zootopia expansion — Shanghai Disneyland
- Castle of Magical Dreams — Hong Kong Disneyland
- Frozen expansion — Hong Kong Disneyland
- Walt Disney Studios Park expansion — Disneyland Paris
- Universal Studios Beijing — Liyuan Town, Tongzhou District, Beijing, China
- Sesame Place — TBA



NEWS IN THE QUEUE

By Brittani Tuttle

HUGE REVEALS FOR DISNEY PARKS AT D23 EXPO

Location: Anaheim

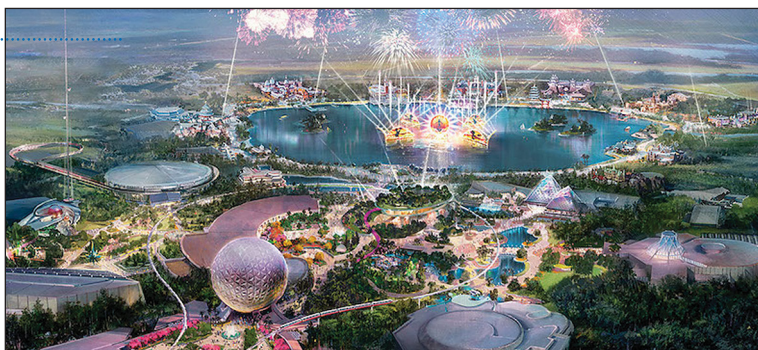
The D23 Expo just took place, and with it came huge reveals for the Disney Parks in Orlando and Anaheim and beyond. Some of the highlights from the bi-annual Expo include new details on Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser, the immersive hotel experience coming to Walt Disney World; a new Cirque du Soleil show themed to Disney animation coming to Disney Springs; updates on Avengers Campus coming to Disney California Adventure and Disneyland Paris; the transformative updates coming to Epcot over the next few years, including a new Mary Poppins area and attraction, and much more. For all the details, search D23 Expo at AttractionsMagazine.com.



A LEGACY LEAVING

Location: Epcot

Epcot is currently undergoing major changes, the most notable of which is the removal of the Leave A Legacy monoliths that once stood in front of Spaceship Earth. But don't worry if your face is one of the ones featured. The display will be relocated to a new spot outside the park gates. Other Epcot staples are set to close over the next few months — either temporarily or permanently — including Club Cool, Innoventions East, Fountain View, Epcot Character Spot, Electric Umbrella, MouseGear, Fountain of Nations, Colortopia and Take a Nanooze Break.



A WHOLE NEW GALAXY TO EXPLORE

Location: Disney's Hollywood Studios

The wait is finally over - Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge is now open at Disney's Hollywood Studios. In this new land, guests will journey to Batuu, a new planet in the Star Wars universe, as they become a part of the story. Travelers can interact with the locals, take in galactic food and drinks, browse the unique merchant shops and fly the fastest hunk of junk in the galaxy aboard Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run. As a result of this opening, Kylo Ren's meet-and-greet in Star Wars Launch Bay is now being occupied by Darth Vader. As the Walt Disney World version of Galaxy's Edge is almost an exact copy of the one at Disneyland, see our Summer 2019 issue for our full coverage.



PACK YOUR SUITCASES AND DREAMS

Location: Disney California Adventure

The long-running street show, Red Car Trolley News Boys, has ended its run. The show came to a close as a result of low viewership and continuing construction on the new Marvel land. There's no word if it'll ever return.



PARTY LIKE EVERY NIGHT IS HALLOWEEN

Location: Magic Kingdom



Walt Disney World has launched a new ticket that will allow frightful fans to attend nearly every Mickey's Not So Scary Halloween Party this year. The new \$299 Party Pass includes admission to all event nights except for Oct. 31. There's no word yet if it'll be offered again next year or for the Christmas parties.

TASTES OF JAPAN

Location: Epcot

A brand-new gourmet table service restaurant is now open in Epcot's Japan pavilion, Takumi-Tei. This new restaurant offers an upscale dining experience that will give guests a better understanding of Japanese culture, traditions, and their connection to nature. Look for our review in a future issue.



SEE YOU ON THE COURT

Location:
Disney Springs

NBA Experience, the brand-new destination in Disney Springs West Side is now officially open. Guests can enter the world of professional basketball and experience 13 different basketball-related activities across 44,000 square feet and two floors. This new building is in the same location as the former DisneyQuest.



A SPOOKY BASH TAKES OVER DISNEYLAND RESORT

Location: Disney California Adventure



A new Halloween event has made its debut at Disney California Adventure, Oogie Boogie Bash - A Disney Halloween Party. This event features many new experiences, including a new "World of Color" spectacular, a "Descendants"-inspired dance party, a new stage show with Mickey Mouse and a Disney villains walk-through experience.

RIDE THE STEEL CURTAIN

Location: Kennywood Park



PHOTOS BY ANDY GUINGUNDO

Kennywood Park's newest roller coaster, The Steel Curtain, is now open. Inspired by the Pittsburgh Steelers football team, this coaster takes riders on the world's tallest inversion at 197 feet high. Some of the players even showed up to ride.

YOUR DESTINY AWAITS

Location: Walt Disney World

Gran Destino Tower is now open to guests as a new addition to Disney's Coronado Springs Resort. The new tower offers 545 guest rooms, a two-story lobby, new meeting areas and a rooftop restaurant and lounge.



SOAR TO NEW HEIGHTS!

Location: Tokyo DisneySea

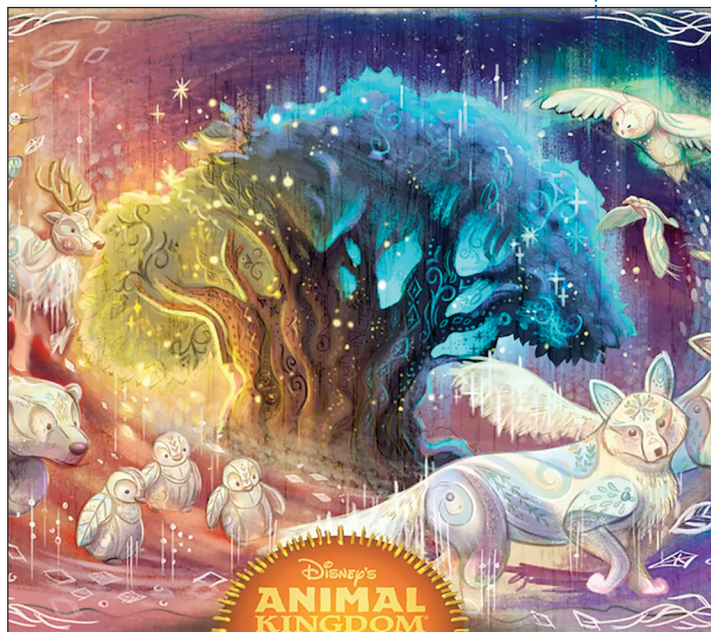
Guests can soar to new heights aboard the new attraction, Soaring: Fantastic Flight. Based on Soarin' Around the World, this new attraction features some exclusive new scenes.



PHOTO BY DISNEY

HOLIDAYS IN THE WILD

Location: Disney's Animal Kingdom



Christmas is coming to the jungle, as Animal Kingdom is hosting a slew of new seasonal offerings this winter. The village of Discovery Island will be covered with white holiday decorations and animal-inspired luminaries, as well as host a new life-size artisan-sculpted animal puppet experience. The Tree of Life will awaken with a series of winter-themed displays and a holiday-inspired musical score.

NEW EATS AT THE SPRINGS

Location: Disney Springs



It was announced earlier this year that Bongos Cuban Cafe would be leaving Disney Springs, and now, we know its replacement: Beatrix, the Chicago-based restaurant from Lettuce Entertain You. Other new additions to Disney Springs include a cookie dough food truck, Sunshine Churro carts, and a new Ample Hills Creamery location.

DINOSAURS RULE AGAIN

Location: Universal Studios Hollywood



A new era of dinosaurs has arrived at Universal Studios Hollywood with the opening of Jurassic World - The Ride. This re-theme of Jurassic Park - The Ride features the stars of the modern film franchise, along with iconic dinosaurs from the films.

AN EPIC ANNOUNCEMENT

Location: Universal Orlando



Universal Orlando finally shared the news that everyone has been waiting for — its newest theme park, Universal's Epic Universe. Not much news on the park has been shared, but it will be located near the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando. See The Rumor Queue later in this issue for our guess as to what lands the park will have, and turn a few pages to see what our Top 10 columnist would like to see.



PHOTO FINDS

Theme parks and attractions are always filled with fun things to see and our photographers are there to capture it all.



The **Moon Tree Garden** is now open at **Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex**. The garden features 12 trees grown from the seeds that orbited the Moon, and a George Lundeen **sculpture** called **"The Eagle has Landed"** depicts astronauts Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins in their spacesuits.



Pixar Pier at Disney California Adventure was recently completed with the opening of **Inside Out Emotional Whirlwind**. Guests ride in eight Memory Movers guided by Riley's emotions — Joy, Sadness, Anger, Disgust and Fear. The ride was moved and refurbished from A Bug's Land where it was known as **Flik's Flyers**.



PHOTOS BY SAMANTHA DAVIS-FRIEDMAN

PHOTO BY WALT DISNEY WORLD



The stars of "Toy Story 4" pose with their Toy Story Land counterparts at **Disney's Hollywood Studios**. The press conferences for major movies are usually held in the Los Angeles area, but this one was held at Walt Disney World, a fitting location.

PHOTO BY BANKS LEE

The Jurassic Park ride at Universal Studios Hollywood was recently redone and reopened as **Jurassic World: The Ride**. Stars **Chris Pratt** and **Bryce Dallas Howard** were on hand for the grand opening ceremony. So was **Blue**, one of the dinosaurs guests can meet daily at the park.



PHOTO BY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD

Both **Disney's Animal Kingdom** and **Disney California Adventure** celebrated **The Lion King** this summer. The main feature at California Adventure was the **Tale of the Lion King** show. Animal Kingdom had fun activities, foods, photo opportunities and **dance parties**.





VERSUS

We put attractions head-to-head.

By Tharin White

Which Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge is Better?

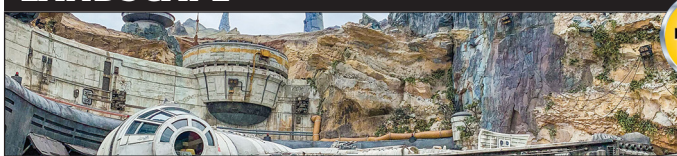
Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge is now open at Disneyland and Walt Disney World. They are almost exact copies of each other. So which one should you visit? We break it down for you.

WALT DISNEY WORLD

VS.

DISNEYLAND

LANDSCAPE



The Florida version of the land has significantly darker and more saturated colors than the California counterpart. These colors, especially the darker blacks in the spires, really make the land pop.

tie



Disneyland's version, while still immensely beautiful, leans towards tans and browns instead of more vibrant options. These colors help the land blend in well with the nearby Big Thunder Mountain Railroad attraction.

RIDE OPENINGS

winner



Walt Disney World was the second place for Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge to open, but it will be the first location for Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance. The upcoming attraction will open Dec. 5.



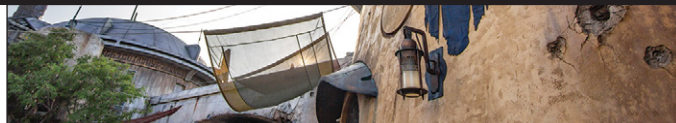
Disneyland's version opened first to thousands of Star Wars fans, but now it will place second for an upcoming attraction. Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance will open January 17 in California.

UPCOMING OFFERINGS

winner



Eventually the Walt Disney World version will also offer a multi-day experience with a Star Wars hotel right next to the land.



Disneyland will not be getting a Star Wars hotel, but it has been rumored (along with Walt Disney World) to be receiving a dinner experience sometime in the future.

ALCOHOL

winner



Walt Disney World wins with alcohol being offered at nearly every single food location. Guests can get tequila-spiked green milk and a bourbon-infused option at Ronto Roasters alongside the large selection at Oga's Cantina.



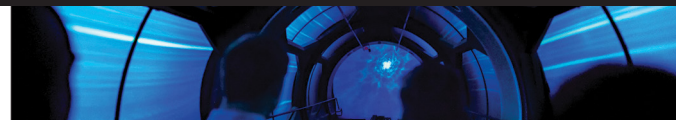
Disneyland's version only offers alcohol in Oga's Cantina. This is currently the only spot to get alcohol in Disneyland Park besides Club 33.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

winner

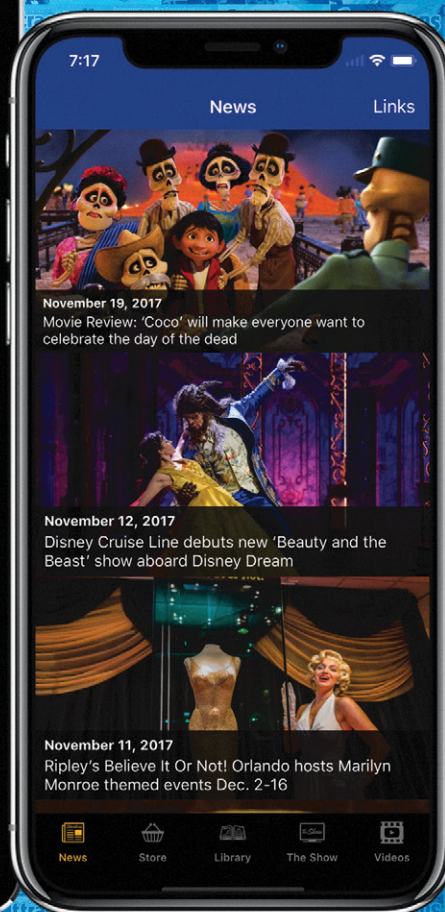


Disney's Hollywood Studios has the nickname "Star Wars park" for good reason. Nowhere else in the United States can guests see a stage show and a nightly fireworks spectacular themed to the film franchise. The park also offers Star Tours, the Jedi Training Academy, a dessert party and Star Wars Launch Bay.



Disneyland offers Star Tours, Star Wars Launch Bay and, occasionally, Hyperspace Mountain, an incredibly fun layover to Space Mountain.

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The Fantastical Career of Imagineer Kevin Rafferty

Imagineer Keven Rafferty lives a magical life. You'd expect that being a Disney Imagineer would be a great job, but Rafferty's seems just a bit more fantastic. In his new book, "Magic Journey: My Fantastical Walt Disney Imagineering Career", he takes you through his career, from almost becoming a priest, all the way through to his work on Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway attraction, which is opening next year. But it's the things that just happen to happen to him along the way that makes his stories "fantastical", like the time he ended up in first class with the Rolling Stones, or when he stayed in a haunted hotel during a travel trip. You can read all about all that and more in his book. But we had a few extra questions for our Q&A.



You had an interesting career path before working at Disney. What made you decide to not become a priest?

When I was in the seminary, I didn't leave behind my love for pop culture, TV, movies, animation and theater. While fellow students were diligently translating English into Latin, I was turning the thick pages of my Latin textbook into an animated flipbook! One enters the seminary because they are called to be a priest and one leaves the seminary because they realize they no longer have that vocation and feel the call to do and be something different. I can't explain it, but I began to feel a very strong calling to be in the entertainment industry, specifically Disney. When I left the private seminary and entered a public university as an art major, quite a radical change, I felt a powerful "draw" at that time to become a Disney animator. That's all I wanted to do and be and that became my passion and focus. That is, until that moment when I discovered Walt Disney Imagineering. Every life experience I had before that, whether in school, seminary or involvement with my long list of personal interests and hobbies, set the stage for that thing I was meant to be – an Imagineer.

What was your first job at Disney and how did that help you as an Imagineer?

My first job at Disney was washing dishes at the Plaza Inn Restaurant at Disneyland. Although that experience was hard work, being there really helped set the stage for my future role as an Imagineer because it gave me insight to, and great appreciation for, the every day inner-workings and operation of a Disney theme park. Late at night after my shift on my own time, I used to explore the attractions when the park closed to learn everything I could about them. I marveled at the theatrical design, staging and showmanship, and sometimes I'd get a backstage personal tour from someone working there after hours. I fell in love with how everything was designed and

worked to keep Disneyland guests happy and entertained all day long. And having park experience, whether in the foods division, operations or custodial, puts you on the front line, so to speak, which helps you better understand, not only what the guests love, but what the park requires and has to do to better operate, maintain and provide the best possible experiences for the guests. Through the years, every show or attraction project I ever worked on was influenced in some way by my past in-park experience and knowledge gained there. Some of the best Imagineers I've known and worked with, including Marty Sklar, Tom Fitzgerald and Tony Baxter, began their Disney careers in a Disney park.

What is the most famous Disney phrase you've written?

I've written a lot of show and attraction stories and scripts and many songs heard in the parks, but perhaps the most famous Disney phrase I've written was not for use in the parks at all. And it wasn't a phrase as much as it is a question:

QUESTION: How many Imagineers does it take to change a light bulb?

ANSWER: Does it have to be a light bulb?

This question has been used in many executive speeches to highlight the inquisitive and adventurous nature of Imagineers and this Imagineering slogan of sorts appears in two Disney books. I originally wrote this question for the book "Walt Disney Imagineering: A Behind the Scenes Look at Making the Magic Real", and most recently Marty Sklar uses it again in his most recent and final book, "Travels with Figment".

Of all the attractions you've worked on, which do you hope never goes away?

The one I hope never goes away is Radiator Springs Racers in Cars Land at Disney California Adventure. When I used to work as a dishwasher at Disneyland, my fellow dishwashers and



Rafferty worked with Don Rickles, who provided the voice of Mr. Potato Head in the Toy Story Midway Mania ride.



Rafferty shows off his Imagineering hard hat and safety vest.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Rafferty poses in front of a model of Cars Land at the first D23 Expo in 2009.

I would oftentimes hang out after our shift late at night near our cars parked in the cast member parking lot, and dream about attractions we'd create if we could. Well, dreams do come true because I helped to create Radiator Springs Racers, which is now located on the very spot in what was once the cast member parking lot where I used to park my car when I was a dishwasher with nothing but dreams. But I'm pretty sure this anchor Cars Land attraction isn't going away too soon, because it's six acres in size, including 288,000 square feet of hand-sculpted, hand-painted rockwork that is Ornament Valley and the massive Cadillac Range!

What are you most excited for guests to experience in Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway?

I've worked on many attractions in my over 41 years of Imagineering career, but I must say, there has never been one quite like Mickey & Minnie's

Runaway Railway. We have something really special with this one. I love it and I know our guests are going to love it too! It's strange to think that in the history of Imagineering and the Disney parks, there has never been a Mickey-themed ride-through attraction until now. I believe that's because Mickey is "every man." He's done so many different things and has been everywhere. He doesn't come with a place or a job like Lightning McQueen (racecar) and Mater (tow truck) who live in the recognizable town of Radiator Springs, or Anna and Elsa who have distinct roles and live in a recognizable place called Arendelle. It's interesting to note that when my colleague Rob't Coltrin and I came up with the concept for Toy Story Midway Mania!, we originally called it "Mickey's Midway Mania! But Mickey didn't feel right as the host of a boardwalk game. Nothing in his past naturally connected him to that theme. But when the new series of Mickey Mouse cartoon shorts came to the Disney

Channel, his unique character style, the off-register art direction, the on-edge comedy, cadence and music of the show gave us a distinct and recognizable hook upon which to hang our attraction design hat on! Plus, the moons were in alignment for the first-ever Mickey ride to finally come along because the special effects and state-of-the-art theatrical technology required to bring the flat world of the Mickey shorts into an immersive, fully dimensional theatrical and believable experience is finally here, or almost here! We are actually inventing the technology that is not yet available because we have a solid story and vision to work to; in other words, we have a need and case for invention. To me, the most exciting thing about Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway is it has an original attraction story and an exclusive-to-the-attraction new theme song!

As an Imagineer, what is your biggest regret?

One would think after a four-decade

career in one place with one company, there would be some regrets along the way. But I have to say, and I am quite blessed for being able to say this: I have no regrets. There is, however, something I wish I could have done sooner. When Marty Sklar was at the helm of Imagineering, I always promised him (and myself) I would come up with a new major attraction idea that had an original Imagineering-generated story and a brand new, exclusive-to-the-attraction singable theme song in the spirit of Haunted Mansion and Pirates of the Caribbean. Oftentimes I'd run into Marty and he'd say with that famous sparkle in his eye, "Got that new attraction yet?" I'd always respond with, "I'm working on it!" It wasn't until after Marty's passing that I landed on the concept for Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway. Not only is it the first ever Mickey-themed ride-through attraction, it has an original story and song. To me, this is the hardest thing to do as an Imagineer. Of course, our guests love to experience the characters and places they know and love from their favorite movies like Frozen and Cars in popular attractions like Frozen Ever After and Radiator Springs Racers. But offering them an immersive ride-through experience, something entirely new, something that promises to delight and surprise them because the experience doesn't already come with an already known, built-in story and place, is the most exciting thing to me. By the way, with a few months to go before opening Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway, I'm currently



Rafferty and Cars Land Art Director Greg Wilzbach test out the ride vehicles in Radiator Springs Racers.

working inside the new attraction facility getting everything ready. The other day I heard a conduit-carrying electrician walking past me humming the new attraction theme song. He looked at me and said, "I can't get this song out of my head!" It's working! Marty would have loved that!

How easy will it be for you to retire? What are your plans?

When I started my career as an Imagineer in the 1970s, there were only two Disney theme parks in existence at that time, Disneyland and the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World. As a second-generation Imagineer, I have been there to see, experience and even contribute to the ideation, design and development of more theme parks around the world and everything in them, beautiful resorts, Disney cruise ships and so much more. Imagineering

has accomplished a lot in the last 40 years! Although it has been a lot of work and a lot of time spent away from home, being an Imagineer for more than four decades has been like a dream. I have never taken a day of it for granted and I have always been thankful for the rare opportunity I've been given to help keep Walt Disney's theme park and dimensional storytelling legacy alive. Truly it has been an honor. That said, and having enjoyed such a rare and exciting career all these years, it certainly won't be easy for me to retire and leave behind my brilliant Imagineering friends and colleagues and all of the opportunity, challenge and pure joy of working with them to create shows and attractions for Disney theme parks. I've really loved it and I hate to leave it! And yet, I've been doing so much for so long, with so much energy and focus, I feel like I'm ready to hang up my Imagin-Ears. As Winnie the Pooh said, "How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard." What are my plans after I retire? I'm going to Disneyland!



Rafferty signs a copy of his new book, "Magic Journey: My Fantastical Walt Disney Imagineering Career" for a fan at this year's Disney D23 Expo.

PHOTO BY DISNEY D23

SUBMITTED PHOTO

By "Skipper" Ben Rebstock

Top 10 Things Universal Should Bring to Epic Universe

New parks bring the chance for new beginnings. They are a blank slate for the imagination, a bare canvas to create new and amazing adventures. But, sometimes, it might be a good idea to remember some of the things that brought you to the dance to begin with: things that put your

parks on the short list for the best theme parks in the world. So for this Top 10, we're looking at the things Universal already does great at Universal Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure that we want to see them also include at their next theme park, Universal's Epic Universe.



10

PARKING GARAGES

Sometimes, it's the simple things in life — like being able to park your car and walk down a couple of moving sidewalks to get into the parks quickly. No parking trams, no ferry boats, no monorails, just park, walk and ride. The two massive parking garages Universal utilizes at their current location are a fantastic setup. It's amazing how many cars those two structures hold, yet it's usually quite easy to get into and even easier to exit. Epic Universe would be smart to design a similar setup for their new park.

9

SECURITY CHECKPOINTS

A couple of years ago, Universal revamped their security checkpoint at the center of the hub connecting the parking garages to CityWalk. They added metal detectors, X-ray scanners and many additional security lanes. The results have been nothing but spectacular. You'd be hard pressed to find any theme park fan that wouldn't agree that Universal has perfected the theme park security scan system. They efficiently and quickly move thousands of guests through every day, and this same security design is an absolute must for their new park.



8

SPIDER-MAN/ TRANSFORMERS- TYPE RIDE

It worked amazingly well the first time, and is a very fun experience the second time. So why not

come up with a new attraction based on the ride system used at both The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man and Transformers: The Ride-3D? Sure, some people thought it was odd that two nearly identical attractions systems were built so close to each other, but, I mean, Epic Universe is going to be, like, miles down the road; nobody will even notice! These ride vehicles could work perfectly for some kind of adventure ride in the rumored Universal Classic Movie Monster section of the park. Spider-Man and Transformers consistently have long lines every single day, so we already know people enjoy these type of rides, so another one centered around a popular intellectual property wouldn't hurt.



7

ANOTHER BUTTERBEER

When it comes to a specialty beverage served in a park, there is no denying that the greatest of all-time is Butterbeer. Universal hit a home run when they came up with this delicious treat. Others have tried to

replicate this success over the years, and all have failed. So if Universal did it once, can they do it again? Sure, they will probably serve Butterbeer in the rumored Harry Potter/Fantastic Beasts section, but can they come up with something as creative and satisfying for another section of the park? Maybe something based on a drink found in a Nintendo property or a DreamWorks movie? I'm not sure what it might be, but if they can find another alternative to Butterbeer, I'd love to try it on my first visit to Epic Universe.



6

GREAT COUNTER- SERVICE DINING

Universal changed the game with the introduction of Three Broomsticks when they opened Hogsmeade in 2010 and continued with the openings of restaurants such as The Leaky Cauldron in Diagon Alley and Fast Food Boulevard in The Simpsons area. Counter-service dining in a theme park does not have to be all bland hamburgers and hot dogs, or machine-made pizzas. It can be creative, unique, hearty — and even healthy — while still being a part of the unique surroundings and highly themed areas. It would be fantastic to see these same ideas move down the road to Epic Universe. Great dining is a big part of a great theme park experience. Epic Universe will be built around properties that could make for some amazing counter-service experiences.





5

NIGHTTIME SHOW

Nighttime spectaculars at Universal have been hit or miss over the years, with a bigger emphasis on “miss” than “hit.” But their latest effort, Universal Orlando’s Cinematic Celebration was a major step in the right direction. The show’s combination of water fountains, fireworks and projection mapping have made it a must-see ending to your day. The Dark Arts show that can be seen on Hogwarts Castle shows the company knows how to pull off a great evening show. So, what can they do when designing a show like this from scratch? The artwork we saw from the Epic Universe announcement showed what looked like a dancing water fountain surrounded by amphitheater-type seats. Could this be our next, great nighttime extravaganza? I think the success of the shows they currently run is reason enough for Universal to design an all-new show like this for the new park.



4

COKE FREESTYLE MACHINES

We spoke about Butterbeer already, but an even more important thing to bring to Epic Universe from their other parks are the Coke Freestyle machines. Honestly, these are some of my favorite things you can find at their theme parks. Not only do the machines bring great beverage variety, but the ability to have unlimited refills all day by purchasing a cup (and reactivating that cup on return visits) makes getting through the parks that much more enjoyable, especially on the blistering hot and extremely humid summer days in Florida.

3

HALLOWEEN HORROR NIGHTS

Universal’s Halloween Horror Nights have always made fantastic use of areas in the park that might not be used or can easily be utilized for their mazes and scare zones. But, what if the new park was built with Halloween Horror Nights in mind from the ground up, making areas and buildings more customizable for the needs of this incredibly popular event? And what better way to drive guests to this new park and resort area than by giving it a horror makeover each Halloween? Maybe they can create a permanent walk-through haunted attraction while they’re at it. Either way, I think by bringing this event to the new park would make for the most “Epic” Halloween Horror Nights of all time.



2

ANOTHER HAGRID'S

No, I'm not saying build an exact replica of Hagrid's Magical Creature Motorbike Adventure at Epic Universe (although, come to think of it, that might help with the very long lines for this coaster). I'm saying build another attraction utilizing this incredibly fun ride system with highly detailed scenes and audio-animatronics along the track. This combo of thrill ride and non-screen-based show scenes is what Universal fans have been clamoring for over the years and this ride is the perfect mix. They say that lightning doesn't strike the same place twice, which is great because Epic Universe is going to be a short drive down the road. There are so many great video games and movies they can pull from to make another ride using this same ride system. If it comes off even half as good as the groundbreaking Hagrid's coaster, no one will complain.



IMMERSIVE LANDS

While areas like Pandora: The World of Avatar and Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge have opened more recently, it was Universal who set the bar for completely immersive lands when they opened The Wizarding World of Harry Potter: Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley. Both lands are still at the top of the charts when it comes to the level of detail and storytelling they surround the guests with. If they take just one thing from this list that they do great at in their current parks, it's this. Universal has the chance to raise the bar

even higher with the four themed sections they will be building to open the park. They know what they do well already, and they've now seen how Disney has countered. This is their chance to set another new gold standard in immersion. With what they've done in the past and the team they are assembling to lead this new project, including Michael Aiello, who has been a creative force with Halloween Horror Nights for the past 20 years, I have no doubt everything we see in this new park will be "Epic".

DO YOU AGREE WITH BEN OR HAVE A SUGGESTION FOR A FUTURE TOP TEN?

Let us know at info@attractionsmagazine.com or contact Skipper Ben on Twitter @RealSkipperBen



HAGRIDS
MAGICAL
CREATURES
MOTORBIKE ADVENTURE



HAGRID PUTS THE VROOM INTO HOGSMEADE!

Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure is Thrilling Fans at Universal's Islands of Adventure

By Susan & Simon Veness

It's been eight years since the last Harry Potter movie came out, and even longer since J. K. Rowling finished the final book, yet the enduring stories of the boy wizard are seemingly just as popular as they have ever been. That's the only way to explain the opening day crowds at Universal's Islands of Adventure park for the latest attraction to have the Potter seal of approval.

Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure — which takes almost as long to say as does to ride, so let's just call it Hagrid's — made its debut at Islands of Adventure on June 13, and

the crowds have been paying homage to the beloved Hogwarts character ever since.

It probably helps that the coaster is an innovative piece of engineering, a brand new story from the Potter-verse, and another compelling example of immersive design, as well as an absolutely cracking ride experience, but the combination of Rowling and Universal still seems like a match made in theme park heaven.

Much of that runaway success is due to the painstaking work of the creative team, highlighted by Alan Gilmore, an art director for the movie series and a member of Universal Creative for almost 10 years. He's the perfect person to explain what this 'Motorbike Adventure' is all about.

"We've really tried hard to make the storytelling come right to the front," he said. "It's both a thrilling roller coaster ride and a huge storytelling experience, and they merge perfectly together.

"The other key factor is, we wanted to draw in Hagrid's character. He is a very separate character to the other teachers and students of Hogwarts. He is more about making things by hand, he is a little bit crude, but he is the closest to nature of anyone at the school, and this is what his place is; it's all about nature. He has made his own little world and we want everyone to feel that you're visiting 'his' world."

And therein lies the key to the run-



Hagrid himself makes an appearance during the ride in animatronic form.

away success of Hagrid's. While Hogsmeade Village surrounds visitors with the man-made nature of Rowling's wizarding world, this is a far more natural — albeit still essentially 'magical' — realm, where nature and its creatures are primarily in control. It also takes some explaining, especially as it is an all-new extension to Hagrid's backstory.

"Yes, this is a very new place, a part of J.K. Rowling's world that we haven't been into before with this level of detail," Gilmore agreed. "We are deep in the Forbidden Forest and have come across a place that no one has really explored before. It is a ruined architectural structure, and we just call it 'The Ruins'. We don't really know



The Harry Potter stars turned up in high style for the official debut of Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure.



The track layout is an eye-catching design of fast twists and turns, low to the ground, to accentuate the sense of speed on your motorbike.



The ride vehicle itself is made up of seven motorbike-sidecar combinations in one train, and it's a different ride experience in either seat.



what it is, but it is a place Hagrid has been coming to for a long time, and students have been coming with him.

"It is a less formal part of Hogwarts, and Hagrid has a great affinity with it, the forest and the creatures in it. This is where he comes to work with them and help them develop and almost nurture them. Many are fantastical creatures that we are seeing for the first time. We wanted this place to feel very familiar, but also very new as well, an interesting place where your inner child can come out, and somewhere you'll want to explore all the nooks and crannies."

The lengthy nature of the queueing area is all preparation for what's in store, a special ride with Hagrid himself, designed by Arthur Weasley, but with all the quirkiness that Ron's dad imbues into all his projects, i.e. it may not work properly!

"It's got moments that are a bit like Hagrid's house," Gilmore adds. "There are amazing objects around, and you'll feel very familiar when you walk in



The unique ride set up ensures it provides a thrilling three-minute whirl, whether you are on the motorbike or in the sidecar.

because it will feel like his house, an extension to his world."

It's also the cue for a fair amount of visual humor as you wind your way deeper into The Ruins, discovering new elements of Hagrid's magical creatures at every turn before you arrive at the ride itself, a totally unique vehicle with two sides to it — the motorbike and its attendant sidecar — which offers an immediate choice of ride experience.

It definitely has the feel of something innovative and exciting, especially at the

BY THE NUMBERS

Ride length: 5,053 feet

Ride time: 3 minutes

Highest point: 65 feet

Vertical drop: 17 feet

Trains: 7 rows of two seats across

Height requirement: 48 inches



As you wind your way down into The Ruins, there are Easter eggs, both literal and metaphorical, as you discover Hagrid's work.



Universal's ride designers wanted to make sure they paid homage to the two previous versions of the roller coasters that occupied the space now taken up by Hagrid's, including its original incarnation as the dueling roller coaster that pitted the Fire Dragon against the Ice Dragon — hence some of the wall art.

moment the lights on the motorbikes all come on at the same time as you await your turn. The moving platform — very much like *Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey* — beckons riders forward, and it's time for the real adventure to begin.

"Yes, the ride is something very new, something absolutely thrilling," Gilmore confirmed. "I've ridden many of America's greatest coasters and I have to say this is right up there. It is extremely visceral. The moment you get on is the moment you start flying.

"There are different experiences with the sidecar and the motorbike, and you'll get a completely different viewpoint from each one. And, if you're in the front, the middle or the center, again, they all offer a different experience. I think people should try to ride in every seat if they can!"

As with the long, winding queue, there is also a lot to see once you are "airborne" on Weasley's exhilarating contraption, with no fewer than seven separate launch points to keep the adventure whizzing along at speeds up to 50 mph (although it will seem faster thanks to the relatively open nature of the ride vehicle).

"Arthur has enchanted the bikes to create this train and you fly around at amazing speed," explained Gilmore. "You go through the forest, meeting all these amazing characters; you meet Hagrid himself, you meet the Skrewts, you meet Fluffy, and you go into the Devil's Snare, which is very scary. There are just so many parts of this great story. I would use the word relentless because it's very strong and physical, and you'll want to go back on it again straight away."

He's not wrong, you know. Once we had ridden on either seat, we were immediately excited to go back and try it again, swapping seats for the alternate experience. And it really does deliver that visceral thrill Gilmore promised, especially on the motorbike itself, where it feels you are more exposed, but also more in charge of the vehicle thanks to the clever illusion of control.

The different sections of the ride maintain the feeling of flying at ground level, especially on the reverse track following a 65-foot-tall spike where, in typi-

cal Weasley fashion, your bike's magical propulsion briefly gives out! This sudden switch backwards drops riders into the clutches of the Devil's Snare where, well, let's just say things take another turn for the unexpected.

It certainly leaves you breathless – and eager for more. But where did the theming come from, and how did Universal decide on Hagrid as the central character for their latest Potter-fest?

Gary Blumenstein, creative director for Universal's creative team, is the man to put the details on this part of the Magical Creature feature. "It started about three years ago," he said. "We were looking at what we could do to expand The Wizarding World of Harry Potter: Hogsmeade and were looking at the site of Dragon Challenge.

"We knew we wanted to replace it, and we had about seven acres to do that in, so, by looking at the location we had, with Hagrid's Hut right there [as part of Flight of the Hippogriff], we thought it would be a natural extension to expand Hagrid's story, tell a new story and take guests on a 'Care of Magical Creatures' class, making it thrilling for the whole family."

From that specific starting point, the ideas came thick and fast, Blumenstein explained. "We sat down with our creative team and thought, 'What do we really want to do here?'"

"We were replacing an iconic and hugely popular attraction, but we wanted to be different and create a new experience that was more of a story coaster, so that was what took us along the path we chose. We actually sat down and laid out a story first, and then tied it all together with the coaster elements."

Once the coaster idea had been set in stone, the next detail to cement was the ride vehicle. And this one was easy, said Blumenstein. Cue the unique motorbike-and-sidecar design.

"Yes, that was purely because of Hagrid. It is Sirius Black's motorbike and Hagrid is seen in the films riding it," Gary told us. "It was an iconic moment in 'Deathly Hallows' in which Hagrid and Harry are escaping Voldemort and we thought it would be a great coaster experience to recreate that. We spent a lot of time working with the Warner Bros. team in getting the design correct and adapting it to a coaster vehicle.



One of the key elements for the new ride was using Hagrid's Hut, which is next to the Flight of the Hippogriff ride, as the design starting point. The queue for the new ride passes behind it.

"We have a very good relationship and history of working with Warner Bros. They are the guardians of the vision, and we respect that. We come into it very seriously, knowing the fans expect us to have the highest level of quality possible, and so we work very well in getting those details right. It's not always easy. There is a lot of detail and a lot of things to work on, but I think the fans are going to be thrilled by what we have here."

Indeed, it is hard to imagine Potter devotees not being delighted by this latest immersive experience that takes them ever deeper into Rowling's realm, not only highlighting well-known plot points, but expounding on them and providing relevant new details to enjoy.

Again, it was uppermost in the minds of the design team. "As we were laying out the story, we had a menu of elements we could use, and we were thinking 'How does the story fit with that?' And it was kind of back and forth in many ways," Blumenstein revealed. "Everything we do in terms of the thrill elements has to be directly tied to the story, so the reason why you drop has to be related to that story. They can't just be gratuitous thrill elements."

Fans will certainly want to keep their eyes open for plenty of hidden details along the way, especially through that sumptuous queue. Blumenstein admits there are numerous Easter Eggs to look out for – although he's not saying exactly where.

"I'm not going to give away a lot, but I will say keep a lookout for references to both

Dueling Dragons and Dragon Challenge, while there are also Easter Eggs in terms of both the books and films," he admitted.

"We actually adapted many scenes from the books. Even the runner beans behind Hagrid's Hut are a reference in the book to him tending to his runner beans. Wherever we could, we threw in elements that made sense to the story."

And therein lies the true fascination of this adventure, the remarkable level of in-depth theming. The Ruins have been completely remade from the structure's previous incarnation as the Dragon Challenge coaster (and Dueling Dragons before that), and those familiar with the earlier versions will struggle to recognize the new-look maze-like interior.

However, for those who have been to Scottish castles such as Invergarra and Dunnottar, or Castle Roche and Clifden Castle in Ireland, the Islands of Adventure version should look distinctly recognizable, and there's a good reason for that, according to Gilmore.

"All around us we have this amazing reminiscent structure of Hogwarts, a medieval gothic architecture style," he pointed out. "It's something that will be very familiar to people from Scotland, England and Ireland, but it may be a new education for people in America, and I want them to feel they are in a very authentic place."

"To me, I grew up around this kind of thing [in Ireland], and it feels totally authentic. This is 'home' to me – and home is now in Orlando."

Can You Tell Me How To Get To Sesame Street?

SeaWorld Orlando Opens Iconic New Land

By Kimberly Button



The iconic 123 Stoop and Mr. Hooper's Store were expertly recreated from the classic television show in Sesame Street at SeaWorld Orlando.

What once was just a lyric in a childhood TV show theme song has now become an actual question asked by guests at SeaWorld Orlando.

Sesame Street is now open, replacing the former Shamu's Happy Harbor play area. The six-acre colorful playland is geared towards kids and kids at heart. After all, anyone that has grown up watching the lovable characters learn and make friends on the infamous street will feel like they are a kid again as they wander through the theme park's newest land.

A Nostalgic Stroll with a Modern Twist

You might be surprised at how large the Sesame Street area is and how much there is to do. In fact, kids could easily spend half the day in this vibrant new area.

Beloved buildings are recreated alongside one half of the street that curves though the playland. You will find the 123 Stoop, Big Bird's Nest, Mr. Hooper's Store, Abby Cadabby's Garden and the laundromat. This is where you will also find a variety of interactive experiences, from Elmo appearing with his friends in his window, to Storytime with Big Bird in his nest.

On the opposite side of the street, there's a park with plenty of opportunities for little ones to play. An expansive green lawn is perfect for running or hiding underneath a grass-covered hill. A water park offers a fun escape from the heat for hours on end. Which is why it's a good thing the Eats on the Street food trucks and specialty drink stand are located nearby, with tables for parents to relax at while the kids are getting drenched.

This is where you'll find all of the Sesame Street-themed attractions, as well. (See sidebar.) Plus, a Babycare Center and Quiet Room are also conveniently located in this kid-friendly section of SeaWorld. As a Certified Autism Center, the Quiet Room in Sesame Street is a peaceful place with small interactive play elements, as well as fun ways to refocus and be calm, such as dimmable lighting and bean bag chairs.

Sesame Street Party Parade winds its way down the street at scheduled times during the day. It's the first parade ever at SeaWorld Orlando. The interactive experience features characters from the show, as well as neighborhood people of Sesame

Street, all coming out to encourage kids to play and be active with their friends. It is like a big block party, with dancing, hula hooping and jump roping.

While there is Sesame Place theme park in Pennsylvania, the SeaWorld Orlando park has a more accurate representation of the actual street you know from the PBS and HBO television show.

Recreating a Beloved Address

Sesame Street at SeaWorld Orlando feels just like walking on the TV show set, quite literally. And it is meant to feel that way.

"We worked with Sesame Workshop (the nonprofit media and educational organization behind the "Sesame Street" television show) to kind of lift everything that we could from their actual set and bring it to life," said Amanda Trauger, corporate creative development manager at SeaWorld Orlando.

SeaWorld has been Sesame Workshop's exclusive theme park partner in the U.S. for almost 40 years with a variety of projects,



Big Bird sits in his nest during Story Time as a Sesame Street book is read to the children gathered around.



including Sesame Place, which is America's only theme park based solely on the award-winning show. Yet the Orlando location still offers something different than what you will find anywhere else.

"This is the first time that we've kind of taken what they have done and built it within the theme park. So it's a little bit different than any of the other experiences that you might have seen before," said Trauger.

In fact, Sesame Street at SeaWorld Orlando goes beyond what the show has created for their furry friends on their own television set.

"Our area is bigger than what they have on the set," explained Trauger. "About 75 to 80 percent of Sesame Street at SeaWorld Orlando is what you will see on TV. But then we had to start imagining what the rest of Sesame Street could be. What happens beyond the camera? We take the viewer beyond what they've seen on television. The idea here is that we are building a land where the characters live and play."

In the show, the camera stops at Big Bird's nest with a brick wall beyond. In SeaWorld Orlando, the brick wall area has been imagined into a theater, Sunny Day Salon and a Community Vet Center.

The theater is where guests can have pictures taken with Elmo and his friends. The storyline is that you can go to the back of the house and meet the stars in their dressing rooms. Green screen elements used in SeaWorld's PhotoKey photos will reveal unique elements in each of the character's dressing rooms, such as cookies in Cookie Monster's area.

"All kinds of fun little niches and moments are lifted directly from the set," said Trauger. "We were able to pull files and create some new products that you'll see on the shelves and are used as props in Mr. Hooper's Store. That's a lot of what the nostalgic piece of Sesame Street is. We all know the store, but what's in his stockroom?"

In Orlando, the stockroom has become the land's retail store. The shopping destination blends unusual props



that look like they belong in a neighborhood market with Sesame Street-themed merchandise and plush toys. Here, you



The actual Sesame Street puppets Elmo, Abby Cadabby and Rosita made an appearance in Sesame Street at SeaWorld Orlando for the grand opening. Guests can see the larger walk-around versions of them in the daily parade.



The daily Sesame Street Party Parade is a neighborhood celebration with characters and guests dancing in the street.



be inventive with the size and scale of the Sesame Street that has never been seen before, they still had one focus in mind: making it family friendly. “We were building a land for families and not real buildings. So we asked ourselves, what feels too intimidating to a preschool age child?”

In fact, even the Elmo, Abby Cadabby and Cookie Monster picture props next to the lamp post have been sized so toddlers and young children feel the characters are the same height as they are and are not intimidated.

Of course, SeaWorld was not able to create never-before-seen elements of Sesame Street without working hand in hand with Sesame Workshop. “It has been really interesting, because as we’ve talked with them and worked with them, Scott Chambers

will find some unique merchandise that has been designed by SeaWorld’s Corporate Product Development Team and approved through Sesame Workshop. Half of the fun of shopping, though, is discovering the hidden elements that truly bring the show to life.

Orlando’s Sesame Street land also reveals a skyline that is not seen on the television show, either. “On the TV show set, you may have the stoop, but you only have the first floor and the basement. And then it stops because the camera doesn’t need to go that high. So we had to think how tall would the 123 Stoop actually have to be? If you break it down architecturally, how many floors is it? Is there a sub level? How does it work and who lives in it? We kind of went with the idea that it has three stories to it, and in the basement, that’s where Bert and Ernie live,” Trauger explained. The 123 Stoop building is also where Elmo and Oscar the Grouch live, too. Of course, Oscar lives in the trash can outside the building. He won’t like it, but you can knock on his can and he’ll respond.

Part of the magic of Sesame Street is that you really feel like you are living in the neighborhood. Guests will see Elmo in his window as they stand by the register in Mr. Hooper’s Store. In the distance, you will see Abby Cadabby’s Garden.

Even though the design team could



Oscar the Grouch might just be the only one in a bad mood on Sesame Street at SeaWorld Orlando. But he’ll still take time to greet you.



RIDES AND ATTRACTIONS

Sesame Street Land has kid-friendly versions of classic amusement park attractions typically geared towards adults. The attractions still offer plenty of thrills, though, even for some adults!

Abby's Flower Tower: Get an aerial view of Sesame Street Land as you soar high in the sky and rotate around the flower tower.

Big Bird's Twirl 'N' Whirl: If you like spinning tea cups, then this attraction might be for you.

Cookie Drop!: Just like traditional drop rides, but this one doesn't go as high and has a kid-friendly cookie theme.

Elmo's Choo Choo Train: Definitely geared towards young kids, this slow train ride is like a scavenger hunt, with Elmo calling out items to look for.

Rubber Duckie Water Works: Make plans to get wet in (and around) this water play area complete with water guns.

Slimey's Slider: Swoop back and forth, going higher and higher each time, on this ride through Oscar the Grouch's compost collection.

Super Grover's Box Car Derby: A kid-friendly roller coaster perfect for the younger daredevils.



[senior vice president/general manager, Educational Media and Licensing, North America] has said, 'How do you know what's behind the set?' They've said sometimes we think you know us better than we know ourselves!"

Interactive Experiences

A big part of the fun of Sesame Street is the "pockets of play" that SeaWorld Orlando has created, according to Trauger.

"One of the things we want to make sure is that we are not being passive. We really want kids to participate actively. We want kids to be able to touch something and not be scared."

Key to that mission are the 11 interactive experiences throughout the neighborhood where you can stop and play a game. The experiences don't require a purchase to play. However, if you want to add a bit more magic, buying an Elmo or Abby Cadabby Interactive Light-Up Bubble Wand will make the interactives do something a little different with hidden surprises, special effects and exclusive content.

Among the fun interactives is the chance to Create-A-Monster. Kids can create a digital monster by choosing eyes, clothes, hair and more. There are more than 100 million monsters that could potentially be created with all of the choices available. The monsters then magically appear on the Community Center windows and can be seen during the day.

In the Laundromat, the washing machine allows kids to pop the digital bubbles inside. Different styles of clothing, such as underwear, is revealed behind the bubbles. "We're helping kids understand that even though something looks different, it can still be the same thing," Trauger explained. "It teaches matching skills."

Kids can come to the interactives more than once and have a different experience each time. There are a variety of experiences that cycle through, such as seeing the Yip Yip Martians through a mail slot, although the Martians might be in a different location each time you look.

"Building interactives for this demographic has been really fun, because parents are either teaching the children what to do so there is a lot of working together, or the children are teaching their parents. They're saying 'No, you're not doing it right, let me show you!' Whenever you have a preschooler here and they are able to do something on their

own and they're having that kid empowerment moment, that's when it becomes a big deal for everybody," said Trauger.

Unlike interactives in other theme parks, these are created specifically with the youngest kids in mind. Ours are "a lot easier to use than many interactives in other parks because a three-year old can use this," Trauger said. "All of our interactives are play tested. We went to the facility and tested the games. I did what my children would do, such as climb on everything. That's what was part of the acceptance testing for the games. We learned a lot and our interactives changed because of the process based on what the kids were doing. For instance, we learned that kids don't know what a door knocker is, but they do know what a doorbell is."

One of the most impactful experiences in the neighborhood might not have anything to do with technology, though. "Sesame Street's messaging of being Smarter, Stronger, and Kinder goes hand in hand with our messaging," Trauger said. "We thought about ways of how to spread happiness and kindness. There are quotes throughout Mr. Hooper's Store that really share those messages for kids to read during their time there. We put the quotes up, and then we had Sesame Workshop take a look at it. They said they loved it!"



Rubber Duckie Water Works is the perfect place for kids to cool off and have fun.



Model Citizens welcome guests to Lego Movie World for the first time at its grand opening on March 27 at Legoland Florida Resort.



PHOTO BY LEGOLAND FLORIDA



EVERY THEME IS AWESOME!

‘The Lego Movie World’ Gets Immersive Theming Right

By Banks Lee



Guests drop, spin and bounce above Bricksburg while riding Unikitty's Disco Drop.

Over 60 years ago, the first Lego set was released. A little over a decade later, the first Legoland park opened in Billund, Denmark next to the original factory. Since then, there have been countless sets made and seven more parks around the world, with even more to come. But it wasn't until 2014, when a major motion picture based on the popular toy line would be made, aptly named "The Lego Movie."

Fast forward to 2019, and the success of that film not only brought forth a sequel, but a brand new, immersive land at Legoland Florida Resort called The Lego Movie World. Guests visiting the park can "shrink to the size of a minifigure" and enjoy several attractions and experiences featuring Emmet, Lucy, Unikitty and more of Bricksburg's citizens.

"You'll be walking the streets of Bricksburg," said Brittany Williams, senior public relations manager for Legoland Florida Resort. "What we've done is brought the two Lego movies to life here."

The creative team from Merlin Magic Making worked closely with Warner Bros. Studios in order to bring the worlds of "The Lego Movie" to life in the new land. "The Lego Movie World is a game



Guests visiting Lego Movie World are immersed in the city of Bricksburg. There are three attractions, a playground, character meet and greets and a quick service food location.

changer for Legoland Florida Resort,” said Keith Carr, project director of Merlin Magic Making. “This is our largest addition to date and will provide guests around the world with the ultimate movie-to-theme park experience. The

immersion and theming we’ve incorporated into the area is unlike anything we’ve ever done.”

Peter van Roden, senior vice-president of Global Themed Entertainment for Warner Bros. Consumer Products was equally excited about the project, saying, “This highly-themed, colorful land is faithfully inspired by the characters, adventures and landmarks made popular in The Lego Movie films, and we are proud to bring this one-of-a-kind experience to our fans.”

The Lego Movie World is located in an area of the park that regular visitors to Legoland Florida will remember as former home of The World of Chima, which opened in 2013 before closing in 2018 for its transformation into Bricksburg. The main attraction for that land, The Quest for Chi, was a splash battle ride where guests aimed water guns at targets and onlookers. It was the perfect ride during those humid Florida summers, so it ended up being repurposed for The Lego Movie World.

According to Williams, even though it has been re-themed, kids still love a water ride. “You just spray the water at the targets, or you spray your parents walking by outside of the ride, whatever you want to do, it’s a lot of fun.”

It’s now called Battle of Bricksburg as riders float through scenes inspired by Apocalypseburg from “The Lego Movie

2: The Second Part.” There are larger-than-life Duplo aliens to aim your water guns at, but be warned. There is no way around it, you will get wet. And with no height requirement, as long as your child can sit upright, the whole family can enjoy the battle together.

In addition to Battle of Bricksburg, there are two brand new attractions inside The Lego Movie World. Over at Unikitty’s Disco Drop, guests have the opportunity to party with Unikitty aboard a drop tower ride that will take riders above the Cloud Cuckoo Land area of Bricksburg.

Don’t let the words “drop tower ride” fool you. After all, Legoland is a park built for kids, so the height of this ride is only 35 feet with a height requirement of 40 inches. Once riders reach the top, the seats will begin to slowly spin around the tower while also bouncing up and down to some party music.

Unikitty’s Disco Drop provides some great views of Bricksburg, including the giant dog building which houses the land’s marquee attraction, The Lego Movie Masters of Flight. This addition to Legoland Florida puts guests on Emmet’s Triple Decker Flying Couch and right in the middle of “The Lego Movie” and its sequel, while also incorporating an element not seen before at any major theme park around the world.



Many of the The Lego Movie stars can be found in various locations around Bricksburg, including Emmet.



"Once you climb aboard Emmet's Triple Decker Couch, you'll do a 180-degree turn, and that makes it a first-of-its-kind attraction," said Williams. "Once you make that turn, it will reveal a giant dome screen where you'll go flying through the Lego Movie universe." (Think Soarin', but in the Lego Movie world.)

Once guests (40 inches or taller) enter the line, the story will take them to the annual Masters of Flight invention convention, where several characters are building their own flying vehicles for a race around Cloud Cuckoo Land. Guests are invited by Emmet to join him aboard his Triple Decker Flying Couch to participate in the race, but per usual with most theme park rides, things don't go exactly as planned.

When the Duplo aliens begin to invade, Emmet takes riders on an adventure through Cloud Cuckoo Land, Middle Zealand, Pirate's Cove and more. Many of the stars from "The Lego Movie" films have lent their voices to the attraction, including Nick Offerman, who channels his inner Metalbeard to lead the charge on the invading Duplos. Be sure to take a whiff for the smell of cotton candy and more!

Speaking of treats, it wouldn't be a theme park land without some food and

shopping opportunities. In The Lego Movie World, tacos aren't just for Tuesdays. At the Taco Everyday stand, guests can chow down on California street tacos, including two themed to Unikitty and Benny. The Awesome Shop features items based on the two films, including Lego sets, clothes, school supplies and more.

If your little one isn't big enough for the rides, Benny's Play Ship in the center of Bricksburg is a climbing structure featuring interactive elements and two slides. And inside Emmet's Super Suite, guests can meet their favorite minifigures in a recreation of Emmet's apartment.

The Lego Movie World officially opened to guests at Legoland Florida Resort on March 27. The grand opening celebration featured a parade of characters from "The Lego Movie" as well as a performance of "Catchy Song" from the second movie by one of its singers, That Girl Lay Lay.

"The Lego Movie World is a key piece to our expansion and growth as we further cement ourselves as a multi-day destination," added Rex Jackson, general manager of Legoland Florida Resort. "The rides truly capture the whimsical fun and quirky nature of the popular Lego movies."



PHOTO BY BANKS LEE

Get your photo with Lucy, Benny and others inside Emmet's Super Suite, just as little Spencer Parenteau-Lee did here.

The land has proved to be a popular addition to Legoland Florida. So much so, that Merlin Entertainments is bringing the land to two other Legoland parks next year, California and the original park in Billund.

"Our goal is to put a smile on every child who walks into Legoland Florida Resort," said Jackson. "By the looks of excitement on the faces of our guests, I know we accomplished that."



PHOTO BY BANKS LEE

Craving a taco? They aren't just for Tuesdays at The Lego Movie World! Pick up a bite to eat at the Taco Everyday stand.



Guests can take a ride on Emmet's Triple Decker Flying Couch in the Masters of Flight ride.

Table **SERVICE**

By Susan & Simon Veness



The two-story space adds an inviting, contemporary style to CityWalk Orlando's increasingly diverse array of dining options.

The huge wood-fired grill, which is Bigfire's signature element, provides the visual backdrop to Universal's new restaurant as well as the kitchen's essential cooking aromas and flavors.

Head to Your Lakeside Cabin for a Meal at Bigfire American Fare

If the idea of lakeside summer-house dining, complete with wood-fired grills and open kitchen cooking, appeals to you, there is a new restaurant at Universal Orlando's CityWalk that is tailor-made for your tastes.

OK, the "lakeside" may be hard to justify (the main waterway through CityWalk hardly constitutes a lake), but we're prepared to give Universal some artistic license in the case of Bigfire American Fare, as it absolutely ticks all the boxes otherwise.

In the build-up to its July opening, we were promised "warm, modern surroundings, including a fireplace, oversized plaid blankets, and cast iron elements. On the outdoor patio, guests can warm up by the fire pit or play lawn games."

We didn't notice a lawn when Bigfire made its debut, but the rest of the blurb was spot on. The style is definitely contemporary; the fireplace and cast iron elements lend an air of rustic charm to the scene; and the outdoor patio is lovely in the evening - albeit when it's a bit cooler than the heat of an Orlando summer. But there's also an indoor bar if you'd just like to stop in and cool off with a drink and appetizers.

Then there's the food: great lashings of smoked, hearty, meaty goodness (with some tasty vegetarian options in the mix), and a rich array of deep flavors that should satisfy the most robust appetite. This is the kind of fare that would have pleased Paul Bunyan and Davy Crockett.

That's not to say it doesn't have its fancy touches - witness the Short Rib Pasta with oyster mushrooms in a sherry cream sauce, or Lamb Sliders with a mint

aioli - but this is dining the American way. No, the dishes don't actually date back to pioneering days, but there are elements that are distinctly vintage, by design, as Executive Chef Steven Jayson revealed.

"The idea was to create a restaurant you might find in Montana, Colorado or Vermont, by a lake, surrounded by forest, with a really comforting feel to it, and we prepared the menu with that in mind," he told us. "So we created dishes that are comfortable and recognizable, featuring a huge wood grill.

"We cook on 100 percent wood and capture the flavors of that wood in the



Bigfire drew a big crowd for its media preview in June, and the verdict was overwhelmingly positive, with the restaurant's rustic, lakeside motif setting the tone for some memorable menu items and an expansive, all-American ambiance.



Bigfire's outside patio will provide some warmth to Orlando's sometimes chilly winter evenings.



The restaurant's decor and design touches maintain the comfortable, rural feel, including this plaid color template.



The purpose-built wood-fire grills are at the heart of Bigfire's appeal – and smoky flavor profiles.

different types of meat, fish and poultry we serve. Whether it's a big bone-in porterhouse steak or an Idaho brook trout, it will have a wonderful smoky, woody flavor, and we complement it with oven-roasted and wood-roasted vegetables, creating a well-rounded menu of comfort-type foods."

However, before they could create the menu, they had to get used to their new kitchen hardware. It was a near six-month process and one that tested Chef Jayson's team in new ways. "It is a completely custom-made grill," he explained. "We worked with the company to tell them the size we wanted and the footprint we had for it, and they sent down a couple of guys to show us how to operate it."

"We had to learn how to build the fires, how to raise and lower the grills, to build it a certain way so you have a hot spot on every grill, and then how to work with the woods, learning which ones burn faster and so on. I've been cooking for 48 years and this was a really interesting process, learning how to work with these things."

Once the mechanics of Bigfire were established, the culinary team went to work on an all-new menu to complement their fancy grill and, once again, the inspiration came from the good ol' U.S. of A.

The idea, Jayson said, was to feature all-American ingredients to go with the setting. "Not so much from the oceans, but more from the lakes, rivers and prairies. We immediately started thinking about bison burgers, Colorado lamb, Creekstone Farms meats – a great cattle farm in the Midwest – and a lot of other ingredients from all over America."

"Cooking a New York sirloin over the wood-burning grill, the flavor profile is amazing. With gas, the flavor is so clean, there is nothing really exciting about it, but this thing, with just a little salt, a little pepper, you put it on there and it bursts with flavor. The vegetarian Cauliflower Steak, on this grill, is an 'Oh my God' moment, with its shishito peppers, roasted vine tomatoes, warm farro salad and charred tomato sauce. That's what the grill does."

"We have four compartments and fire them up using three different woods [cherry, pecan and oak], with the fourth



Dutch Oven Beef Burgundy.



Idaho-sourced Brook Trout.



Colorado Lamb Chops.



Tableside S'mores.

as a back up. We have one guy who all he does is maintain the fires. We don't have gas, so we can't afford to have the fires go down. We cook most of the seafood on the pecan because it is a little lighter, but they all have a neat, smoky flavor. The trout and lamb do really well on it, and even the vegetables pick up a lot of flavor."

There is definitely much to admire about the menu. The steaks are juicy and the burgers also benefit from the wood-smoked process. The Brook Trout and Lamb Chops are equally succulent, while the wood-charred Brussels sprouts offer a new frontier in vegetable deliciousness.

But one relatively minor dish really caught our eye – and tastebuds. The Campfire Chili is a whole heap of rich, meaty goodness, with a well-rounded intensity that spoke of a long time in the

preparation. It turned out there was a good reason for that.

"The chili is something we created 30 years ago," Chef Jayson admitted. "Jay Stein, the original chairman of Universal, was a chili buff. He shared his recipe with me and we entered it in the Orlando Chili Competition that year, and we won. When I brought him the trophy, he was thrilled to bits.

"So we took his recipe and served it at Universal for years. And we thought why not resurrect it for Bigfire? It's a great chili, with 33 different ingredients, including Guinness stout, and it lends itself perfectly to this environment, whether you get it as an appetizer or on the side with something else."

So, Bigfire American Fare – come for the smoky aromas and majestic meats, but stay for the 30-year-old chili!

BIGFIRE AMERICAN FARE

Location: Universal Orlando CityWalk

Price Range:

Appetizers: \$4 to \$14

Entrees: \$14 to \$39

Desserts: \$8 to \$18

Contact: 407-224-3663

Online: universolorlando.com

Hours: Sunday through Thursday
4 to 11 p.m.

Friday and Saturday
4 p.m. to midnight.

By Brooke Geiger McDonald

Aulani Brings a Bit of Disney to Your Hawaiian Vacation



PHOTO COURTESY OF DISNEY

A breathtaking central focal point at Aulani is the Waikolohe Valley, an aquatic playground offering excitement for kids and relaxation for adults.

Just steps from the pool is a tranquil cove and sandy beach with plenty of chairs and umbrellas. Aulani's beach is beautiful day and night.



For a Hawaiian escape that's equal parts kid-friendly and luxurious, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better spot than Aulani, a Disney Resort & Spa on the coast of Oahu. Overlooking Ko Olina's tranquil beachfront cove, Aulani brings Disney's hallmark storytelling and attention to detail to this breathtaking island retreat, but with an approach that's more Animal Kingdom than Magic Kingdom (read: immersive theming that's not all about the characters).

Creating an authentically "Hawaiian" experience takes the priority here. Sure, if you're on the hunt for Hidden Mickeys, Disney pin-trading and character meet-and-greets, they're all easy enough to find, but if in-your-face Disney isn't your thing, you'll hardly notice it. So whether you worship at the house of mouse or are just looking for the ultimate immersive

Hawaiian getaway, Aulani should deliver a truly magical vacation.

Stay

Accommodation choices abound, from standard hotel rooms sleeping four to Disney Vacation Club villas (which can be booked by anyone) sleeping anywhere from five in a studio or one bedroom to 12 in the sprawling three-bedroom grand villa. One- to three-bedroom villas include a full kitchen with dishwasher, a washer and dryer, multiple balconies and plenty of space for families to spread out. Room theming is traditional Hawaiian, but of course you'll spot magical Disney details like an adorable Hawaiian Mickey lamp and hidden Mickeys in the artwork and upholstery.

If you're on a budget, standard and island view rooms offer the best value, but since taking in the breathtaking beau-



Be sure to take a walk to this grassy point at the far end of the cove for stunning views of the resort.



The Maka'ala lobby's impressive central curved arch is based on a traditional Hawaiian canoe house.



A gifted raconteur, Uncle entertains listeners at sunset during the Mo'olelo Fire Pit Storytelling.

ty of Hawaii is part of the reason you're there, we recommend springing for an ocean view if it's in your budget.

Play

Time flies as you splash the days away in the Waikolohe Valley, Aulani's elaborate network of pools, waterslides, lazy river, kids' play areas, and adults-only pools and spas, many of which also provide sweeping views of the cove beach. The Valley showcases Disney theming at its best: volcanic rock structures housing the slides and surrounding the pools feature hidden native Hawaiian animals carved into the rocks. Families will have fun spotting the humpbacks, sharks and turtles as they drift along the lazy river beneath overhanging lush, tropical foliage.

No need to make your way to the ocean to get up-close and personal with thousands of Hawaii's most beautiful tropical fish. Rainbow Reef, the only private snorkeling spot on Oahu, teems with native species in a saltwater lagoon right in the middle of the Waikolohe Valley. Snorkel for the day (\$25) or as much as you'd like during your stay (\$45) and marvel at tangs, butterflyfish and angelfish. With no dangerous species or currents in the mix, plus an on-duty lifeguard, this is an ideal spot for first-timers - just be prepared for some chilly water.

Parents, rejoice! Kids get their own space to let loose at Auntie's Beach House, a secure 5,200-square-foot space supervised by a talented crew of cast members who, with the help of plenty of arts, crafts, games and a visit or two from favorite Disney characters, keep kids engaged and coming back for more. Like Disney Cruise Line kids' clubs, parents can drop their kiddos at this indoor/outdoor play space free of charge, from 9:30 a.m. until 9 p.m. daily. For \$10, kids can even have lunch or dinner there while their parents steal some adult time.

Relax

Now that you know how to score yourself a kid-free window, book a treatment at Laniwai Spa (the Lomilomi massage gets our vote) and enjoy a blissful afternoon. Make sure to leave yourself some time for the Kula Wai: Outdoor Hydrotherapy Garden where you can

decompress with the help of rain showers, soaking pools, heated whirlpool spas and an ice-cold plunge pool.

Eat

On paper, Aulani's dining options resemble those at other deluxe Disney resorts — elegant signature dining, character meals, quick-service, a cocktail bar/lounge, pool bars and walk-up stands — but the quality is higher than what you'll get in Florida or California.

Aulani's upscale restaurant, 'AMA 'AMA, is a must-visit as much for its modern take on classic Hawaiian cuisine, as for its breathtaking setting — an open-air dining room overlooking the cove — best enjoyed at sunset. Must-order items include the daily fresh fish, sautéed with mac-nut brown butter sauce, succulent center-cut king crab legs, and delectable sides like herb-coconut rice and caramelized Brussels sprouts. End on a sweet note with the pineapple cheesecake or the flourless Kokoleka chocolate molten cake. Come back in the morning for a sunrise breakfast starring a heaping stack of buttermilk pancakes with macadamia-nut Tahitian vanilla sauce or the decadent 'AMA 'AMA breakfast sandwich.

For unparalleled character dining — seriously, this one beats any on the mainland — head to Makahiki for breakfast or dinner alfresco on the terrace with visits from Mickey and pals, decked out in their Hawaiian best. Breakfast gets our vote; it features all the staples, like bacon, eggs and sausage, but our favorites are the items that get the island treatment. Try Mickey waffles drizzled with coconut syrup and fresh local fruits like pineapple with li-hing powder, Ewa watermelon and Hilo papaya. Traditional Asian breakfast offerings round out the more exotic side to this buffet breakfast.

Casual and quick-service options are varied and plentiful. Take a lunch break right on the pool deck and grab local-style fish and chips or coconut-breaded shrimp from walk-up stand Mama's Snack Shop. Hit up poolside bar and grill Off the Hook for tropical drinks and a seared local Ahi sandwich or burger and fries. At Ulu Café, Aulani's most traditional quick-service location, refill your resort mugs and get breakfast, lunch, and dinner (poke

bowls, flatbreads, and pizzas are popular choices).

For the ultimate Mickey-shaped treat, and our number-one must-eat at Aulani, cool off with authentic Hawaiian shave ice at Pāpālua Shave Ice Snack Shop. Choose up to three flavors (we love the tropical choices like guava, mango, lilikoi and coconut), plus add-ons like sweetened condensed milk, ice cream and Mickey ears.

Learn

It's practically impossible to spend a day at Aulani and not get a lesson in Hawaiian history and culture. It all starts in the impressive lobby, flanked with contemporary Hawaiian art (Aulani is home to one of the largest collections in the world).

At happy hour, learn to speak Hawaiian over cocktails and appetizers at the 'Ōlelo Room (don't miss the exotic Popcorn Fries — just trust us).

Kids will have a blast on the Menehune Adventure Trail, a tablet-guided, high-tech scavenger hunt that lets families explore the resort and solve clues to unlock special features and surprises, courtesy of the Menehune, Hawaii's magical, mischievous little troublemakers.

In the evening, cozy up by the beachfront fire pit as Uncle regales you with Hawaiian legends and folklore.

For total immersion, make a night of it at KA' WA'A, Disney's traditional luau. Enjoy pre-show cocktails and activity stations where you can try your hand at the 'ukulele, get tatted up with temporary tattoos, string fresh floral bracelets and more. Dinner is an elaborate feast featuring suckling pig, local seafood and other island favorites like Ahi poke and braised pork. A separate, kid-friendly buffet ensures little ones get their fill too. The main event is a traditional luau show celebrating music, dance, legends and history, and of course Mickey and Minnie will make an appearance.



With so many activities and character visits at Aunty's Beach House, kids won't have time to miss their parents.



Rainbow Reef is a safe and peaceful snorkeling spot.

AULANI, A DISNEY RESORT & SPA

Location: 92-1185 Ali'i Inui Dr, Kapolei, Hawaii

Prices: \$494 to \$799 per night, per standard room

Resort Fee: None

Parking: \$37 per day for self or valet

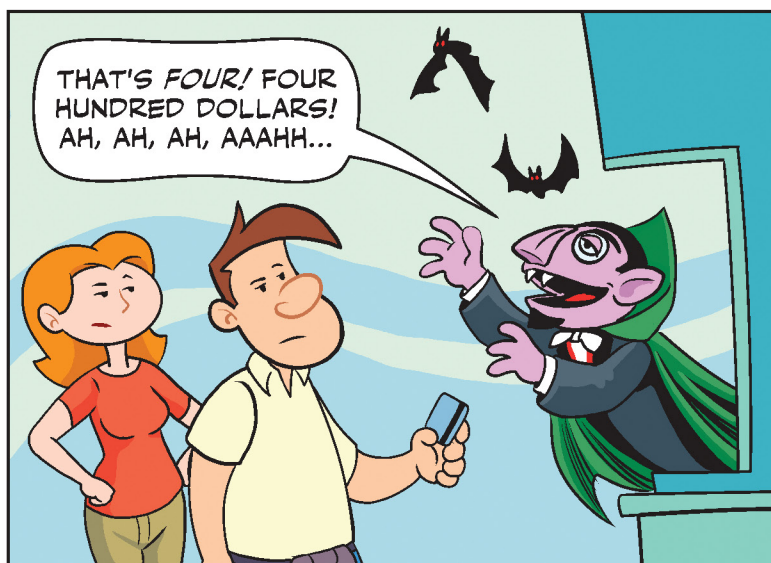
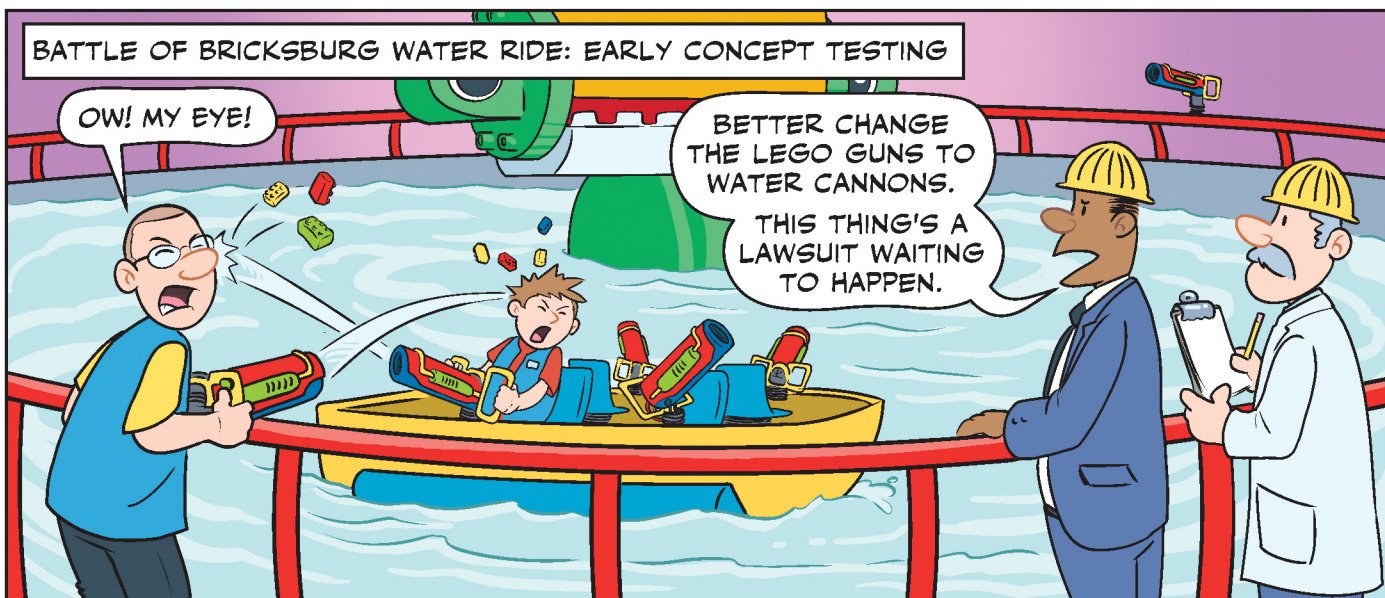
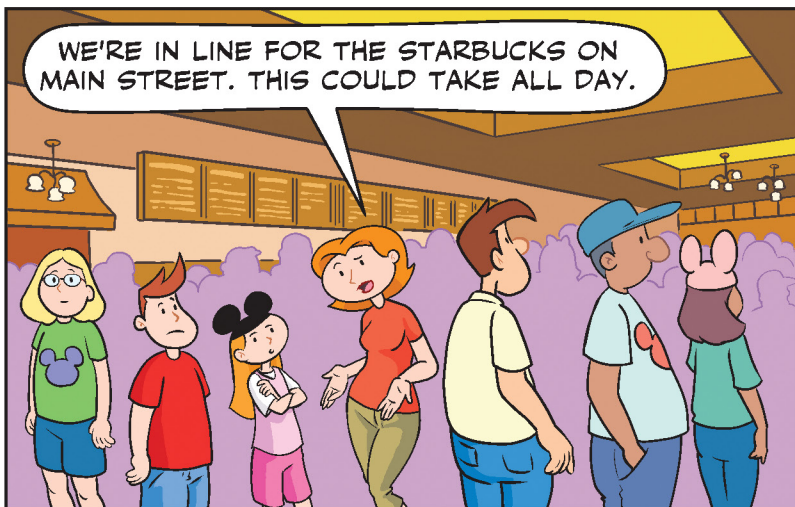
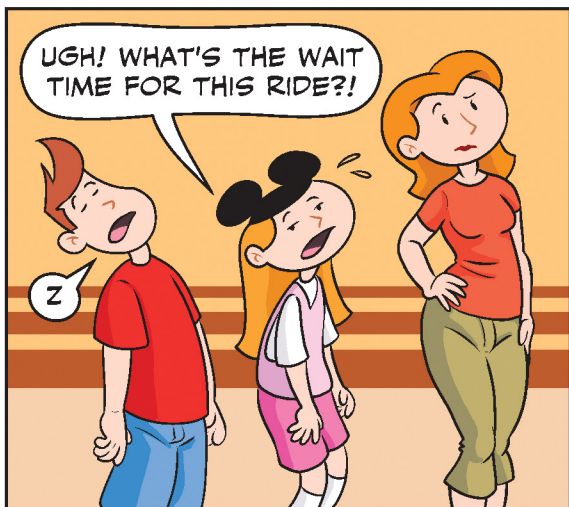
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AMUSEMENT PARK

By Vince Dorse, Created by Pat N. Lewis & John Green





SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the 10 differences in these two photos?

When Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge opened at Disneyland Resort, the grand opening ceremony was held at night in front of the Millennium Falcon with a few celebrities. It was just the opposite for the dedication

ceremony at Walt Disney World. It was held on Aug. 28 during the day with the spires as a backdrop, and lots of characters, including the ones pictured here: Stormtroopers, R2-D2, Hondo Ohnaka, BB-8, and Chewbacca.

BEFORE



AFTER



1. Another spire can be seen on the top left of the photo.
2. A vertical rod in the iron fence has disappeared (between the two Stormtroopers).
3. Chewbacca has one less ammo cartridge on his shoulder strap.
4. R2-D2 has an additional row of switches on his right shoulder.
5. The Stormtrooper (left) has an additional row of vents on his right chest.
6. BB-8 is missing an orange block on the base of his head.
7. You can now see R2-D2 on the cell phone of the man (bottom left) who is taking a photograph.
8. The wall between the Stormtroopers and Hondo Ohnaka now has two guns on his hips instead of only one.
9. Hondo Ohnaka has an orange circular emblem on his side that has enlarged.
10. BB-8 has an orange circular emblem on his side that has enlarged.



THE RUMOR QUEUE

Have a rumor, comment, or question? Send them our way at info@attractionsmagazine.com.

By Tharin White

Unless where otherwise noted, the following is rumor and speculation, and should not be regarded as fact unless confirmed by the companies mentioned.

The D23 Expo provided a slew of answers to many of our rumors, but like always, more have amassed. It appears that the next five years will provide massive changes to Orlando's theme park community and I couldn't be more excited.

Disney Parks

Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge has opened at both Walt Disney World and Disneyland. But, we have plenty more on the horizon with Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance and beyond. Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser, the Star Wars hotel experience next to Disney's Hollywood Studios, is expected to open late in 2020.

Over at Epcot, another major project is expected to open late next year, Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind, a backwards-launching roller coaster. Rumors suggest it will open just in time for the holiday season next year. Epcot was a major talking point at the Expo with details about the new park entrance, the renaming of Future World into neighborhoods, new rides and more. It was also suggested that a multitude of these attractions would open before Walt Disney World's 50th anniversary in 2021. The Moana-themed Journey of Water has been described as a walking experience and not a ride. It's expected to open in summer 2021 alongside most of the reimagining of

the Innoventions area. What is not expected to be finished is the multi-level elevated festival pavilion in the park center or the reimagining of the Spaceship Earth attraction.

Fans have asked Walt Disney World to bring back a nighttime parade for years and once again Disney was quiet on the subject. But I believe this is for good reason. Rumors suggest a parade will return to the Magic Kingdom for the 50th anniversary. But between now and then, another D23 Expo will occur, which would be the better time to announce such an offering.

Animal Kingdom still has rumors about an eventual Zootopia area, but these are based on not much more than fan desire and a similar area in Shanghai Disneyland.

Universal Parks

Universal Orlando announced that Universal's Epic Universe, the Orlando Resort's fourth gate, is underway and is going to be incredible. Details are extremely limited to only what we can see in the concept art. But, from this singular detail, we have made our guesses. The park is expected to be split into separate lands that cannot be seen anywhere except in the immediate area, much like how Diagon Alley and Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge are setup currently. These lands are rumored to

be based on Nintendo's Mario and Donkey Kong, Universal's Classic Monsters, the Harry Potter Fantastic Beasts films and the How to Train Your Dragon films. The concept art also showcases a large hotel in the back of the property. This could possibly be like the Grand Californian next to Disney California Adventure that grants hotel guests a special second entrance into the park. This new park has opening years ranging from 2022 to 2024 with no concrete evidence supporting any specific time yet.

Coming sooner though is the Jurassic Park roller coaster in Universal's Islands of Adventure. This coaster's name was perhaps leaked in a permit request titled, Veloci-Coaster. If so, this confirms the idea that this new high-speed coaster will be themed to raptors. This coaster's construction has not gone vertical, but is still expected to open by December next year.

SeaWorld Orlando

SeaWorld has announced a new attraction will be coming to the Orlando-based park. Concept footage featured high-speeds and diving maneuvers around an icy location. This has led many to become hopeful for a dive coaster. It will be located near the Wild Arctic exhibit.

With the recent success of Sesame Street, there are talks an expansion could come to this land in the form of a show or a dark ride.



MYSTERY PHOTO

WIN AN ATTRATIONS MYSTERY MERCH BOX!

Tell us where you can find this colorful backdrop. Hint: It actually forms a Hidden Mickey and can be found somewhere at Walt Disney World. To enter, e-mail your answer, along with your name and mailing address to mystery@attractionsmagazine.com.



The deadline for entries is Nov. 10, 2019. One answer allowed per person, per issue. Include your name and mailing address with your answer. Everyone who submits the correct location will go into a drawing. One person, randomly selected from all the correct entries, will win an Attractions Mystery Merch Box. We reserve the right to publish the name, city and state of those entering. One winner per household allowed per year.



LAST ISSUE'S MYSTERY PHOTO ANSWER

Congratulations to Stephanie Kiefer from Midway, Penn. who correctly answered the last issue's Mystery Pic. The photo of the training droid and blaster helmet used by Luke Skywalker in "Star Wars: A New Hope" are located inside the Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run at Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge at Disneyland Park and Disney's Hollywood Studios.

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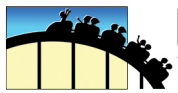
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IN THE LOOP

By Andy Guinigundo



Kings Island to Open Orion Giga Coaster

Mason, Ohio – This all started at last year’s Halloween Haunt. A “funeral” was held for flying coaster, Firehawk (The coaster opened at Kings Island in 2007.) Then the speculation began. One of the recurring predictions, or perhaps simply a want, was the idea of a giga coaster filling this space behind the classic Racer wooden coaster. The industry-accepted definition of a giga coaster is a coaster with a height or drop of 300 to 399 feet high. Cedar Fair, Kings Island’s parent company, has a precedent of parks with a hyper coaster (a coaster with a 200 to 299 feet height or drop) and a giga coaster combination. Cedar Point had the first hyper-giga combination in the world in Magnum XL-200 and Millennium Force. Canada’s Wonderland and Carowinds, likewise, have a hyper-giga combination.

Kings Island already has a frequent favorite hyper coaster in Diamondback. In August, at an event with hundreds of Kings Island enthusiasts in attendance, it was finally revealed that Orion will be the seventh giga coaster constructed in the world, and only the fourth in the United States. Orion will have an initial hill with a height of 287 feet, but with a drop of 300 feet. It will hit speeds of 91 mph covering a distance of 5,321 feet in a trip that will include seven giant airtime hills. This B&M-designed coaster is expected to debut next spring.

Energylandia Opens Zadra

Zator, Poland – Although Energylandia is a relatively new amusement park, having opened in 2014, it is Poland’s largest. It resides about 200 miles from Poland’s capital of Warsaw. Zadra is the park’s 15th roller coaster. It’s a joint

project between RMC and Vekoma. While I-Box steel track technology is not new, this is the first-time RMC has used it in brand new construction. Before Zadra, I-Box track has been utilized to replace traditional wooden coaster track in coasters, such as in last year’s Steel Vengeance, converted from Mean Streak at Cedar Point in Ohio. Newer construction from RMC utilized a different technology called Topper Track. Enthusiasts have grappled with how to classify RMC coasters. Perhaps the best description of Zadra is a “hybrid coaster” with steel track on a wood structure. Regardless, one could simply call these coasters “fun”. Zadra tops out at 206 feet tall and is 4,318 feet long. The chain lifted coaster inverts three times and travels 75 mph. The maximum drop angle is 90 degrees. The ride opened ahead of schedule in August.



Record-Breaking Coaster Coming to Six Flags Great Adventure

Jackson, N. J. – As is routine for Six Flags, it announced all its new North American 2020 attractions on one day at the end of August. Among the announcements, several coasters were announced. The coasters include Sidewinder Safari, a family coaster at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom and Vipère free fly coaster at La Ronde in Canada. Several water coasters were also announced. Perhaps the most intriguing is the Jersey Devil Coaster at Six Flags Great Adventure. This coaster will break three records – world's tallest (13 stories), fastest (58 mph), and longest (3,000 feet) single-rail coaster. While these RMC single-rail Raptor Track coasters burst onto the coaster landscape with two in 2018, none were built in 2019. Jersey Devil will feature an 87-degree and 130-



foot initial drop hill. Riders will experience two inversions in a 180-degree stall and a zero-G roll. As with the other

Raptor track-style coasters, it will feature inline trains, which means riders will sit low to the track, legs straddling the monorail track, in single-file.





LIGHTS, CAMERA, ATTRACTION!



This year celebrates the 50th year of The Haunted Mansion at Disneyland. The Walt Disney World version isn't far behind at 48 years. Both versions are as popular as ever, if not more so. One of the

most popular characters is Constance The Bride. Every once in a while she'll venture outside the Mansion as she did here at Walt Disney World during a private party for the IPW travel convention a few years ago.

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